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# THE ROMANIC REVIEW

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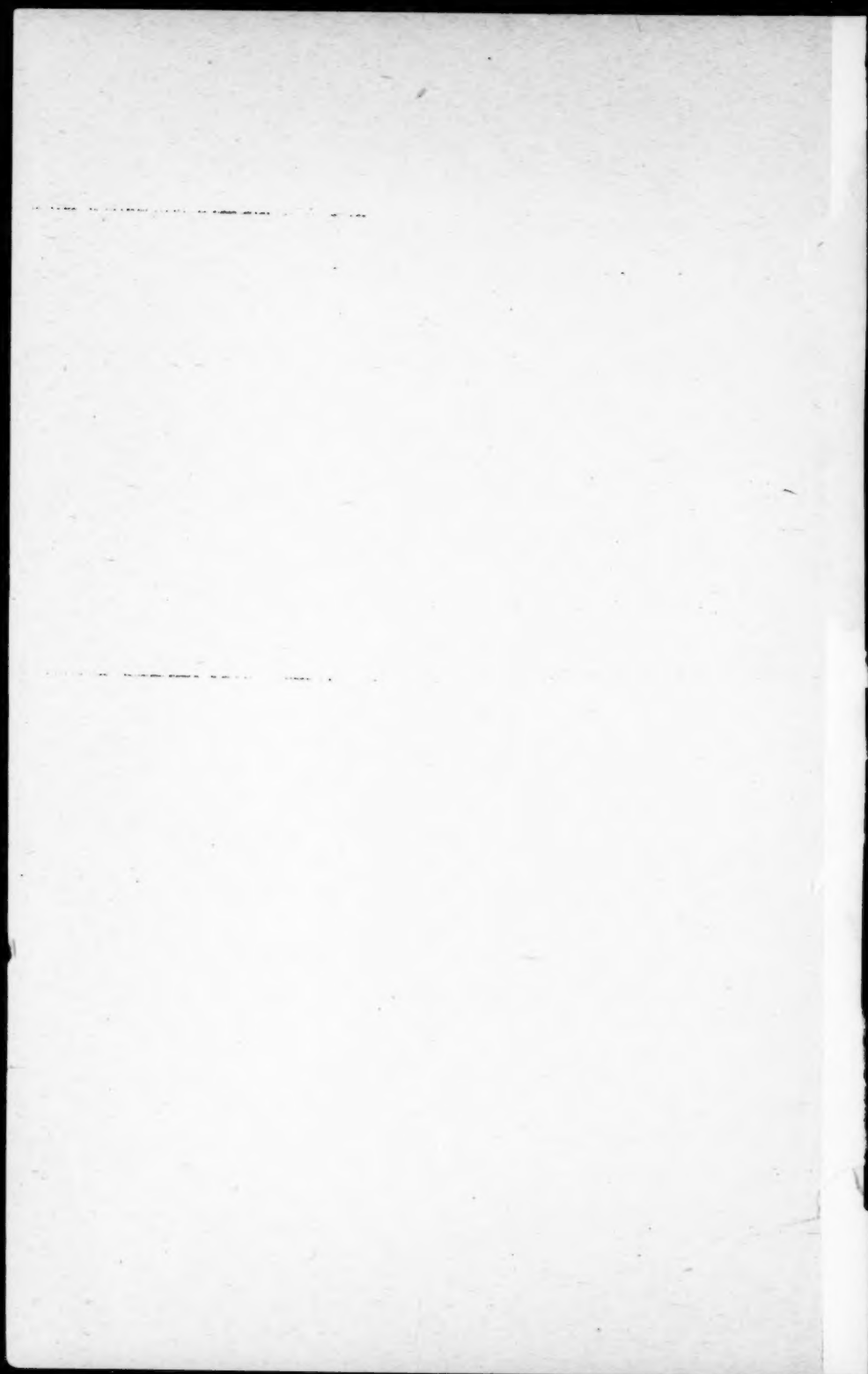
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# THE ROMANIC REVIEW

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"SULLA FIUMANA OVE'L MAR NON HA VANTO"  
(*Inferno*, II, 108)

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THE VERSE SAYS, for one thing, where the poet is when special notice in Heaven is first taken of him. It was the Queen of Heaven who first saw how his way to happiness was blocked; and it was by the intercession of her pity that hard judgment upon him had been altered above. Mary had gone to Lucia and called to her attention the plight of her faithful one below. Lucia in turn had hastened to Beatrice who was sitting beside ancient Rachel and had said:

..... "Beatrice, loda di Dio vera,  
chè non soccorri quei che t'amò tanto  
ch'uscì per te de la volgare schiera?  
    Nod odi tu la pietà del suo pianto?  
Non vedi tu la morte che'l combatte  
sulla fiumana ove'l mar non ha vanto?"<sup>1</sup>

And Beatrice had come to Vergil in Limbo.

It is from her report to him there that we learn of this prior action in Heaven; and it is through her words that we see, from that vantage ground, her lover struggling with death below. But where below? Where exactly is he when Lucia points him out to Beatrice?

The answer is easily given. It is clear from what Beatrice tells Vergil: the Blessed Virgin first felt pity for the sinner below because of that same impediment in his way which Vergil finds when he arrives on the scene; and to this same impediment Beatrice had sent him.<sup>2</sup> It is the Wolf. And when Vergil arrives, the despairing man points out the Wolf at once, calling for aid against her.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, of the three beasts that beset this living man's path, Vergil speaks only of the Wolf. That beast, he says, will let no one pass, but so impedes that she slays. One day a Hound will come to chase her back into Hell; but meanwhile, the short way up the Hill is blocked by the beast and there is only the long way round with him, Vergil, as guide.

Then again, toward the end of the poem, reference is made to the moment when Lucia had called Beatrice's attention to the struggle of her lover

1. *Inferno*, II, 103-108.

2. *Inferno*, II, 94-96:

*Donna è gentil nel ciel che si compiangi  
di questo impedimento ov'io ti mando,  
sì che duro giudicio là su frangi.*

3. *Inferno*, I, 88-90:

*Vedi la bestia per cu'io mi volsi:  
aiutami da lei, famoso saggio,  
ch'ella mi fa tremar le vene e' polsi.*

below. The man who was then engaged in a battle with death now stands at the end of his long journey and, with Bernard now as guide, scans the tier upon tier of the blessed where they sit in the rose of Paradise. The Saint points to Lucia, sitting among the others, with the words:

..... Lucia che mosse la tua donna,  
quando chinavi, a ruinar, le ciglia.<sup>4</sup>

This rephrasing of that moment at the end of the poem echoes, one may note, what was said of it at the beginning, where we were told that the Wolf was not only blocking the way but was pushing the poet back "where the sun is silent" ("chinava le ciglia" suggesting, of course, sleep; and sleep a return to darkness and the night). There too the poet was said to "ruinar":

tal mi fece la bestia sanza pace,  
che, venendomi incontro, a poco a poco  
mi ripigneva là dove'l sol tace,

Mentre ch'i' ruinava in basso loco,  
dinanzi a li occhi mi si fu offerto  
chì per lungo silenzio pareva fioco.<sup>5</sup>

There is thus no difficulty in saying *where* the poet is at the moment when Lucia and Beatrice look down upon him from Heaven. He is then where he will be when Vergil comes to him. The movement of mercy from on high, for all its relays in this particular instance, may not be measured in time. He is "ruining" to a *low place*, he is being driven back *where the sun is silent*. Or, as Lucia says to Beatrice, he is fighting with death *sulla fiumana ove'l mar non ha vanto*.

But her words, for all the apparent clarity of their total context in the poem, leave questions in the commentaries. One of the earliest of these observes that Dante had made no mention of this *fiumana* up to this point;<sup>6</sup> and one commentary of our own day still registers, with a similar observation, a similar note of surprise.<sup>7</sup> In the commentaries<sup>8</sup> one finds too,

4. *Paradiso*, XXXII, 137-138.

5. *Inferno*, I, 58-63.

6. *L'Ottimo Commento della Divina Commedia*, Pisa, 1827, I, 22: "Su la fiumana. Di questa fiumana non fece menzione di sopra; ma deducesi per questo che appiè della valle fosse alcuna grandissima lacuna . . . che ha a significare viziosa e corrotta operazione de' mondani."

7. *La Divina Commedia commentata da V. Rossi: Inferno*, Napoli, 1923, ad loc. cit.: "Dove il mare non può menar vanto di tempeste e pericoli, perchè altrettanto tempestosa e pericolosa è la fiumana; dove, cioè, non è minor rischio di naufragio che sul mare. Ma Dante non ha mai parlato di una 'fiumana' nè ha detto di aver pianto ad alte note nella selva o sulla 'spiaggia diserta.' Gli è che la ricca e libera fantasia del Poeta forma ora in una nuova e vigorosa immagine quella che è l'irruente poesia del suo animo, cioè lo sgomento degli errori morali, senza lasciarsi vincolare da altre immagini fiorite in momenti spirituali diversi."

8. One never sees, I suppose, *all* the commentaries; my own check, in this instance, includes besides the familiar early ones (some of which I was able to see in the Widener Library of Harvard College) those well-known by Scartazzini, Vandelli, Torraca, Casini-Barbi, Steiner, Grabher, Venturi, Mestica, Momigliano, Del Lungo, Tommaseo, Butler, Carlyle and others.

from first to last, a general disagreement not merely as to the meaning of the verse as a whole, but as to the meaning of a first and a second part of it. The questions about which there is divergent opinion are not one but two: a) What is this *fiumana*? b) What does the phrase *ove'l mar non ha vanto* mean?

Grandgent's note to the verse remarks on the two answers commonly given to these questions as follows:

The *fiumana* is perhaps the Acheron, the river of death, which flows beneath Dante's feet. Most commentators understand it as a mere metaphor, signifying the same thing as the *selva*. For a different explanation, see Flamini II, 25; also *Giorn. dant.*, X, 145. If the Acheron is meant, the ocean can rightly be said to have no vaunt over it, as it does not empty into the sea, but runs down through Hell.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that the answers are two (Flamini is an exception in a quite special sense)<sup>10</sup> and not more, is a curious one. But Grandgent's report is quite right: those who have held for the Acheron point to the rest of the verse as perfectly clear in its meaning. The sea has no vaunt over Acheron, for Acheron does not flow into the sea. Whereas, those who take this *fiumana* to be not Acheron but a "mere metaphor" appear without exception to have taken the phrase *ove'l mar non ha vanto* to mean quite another thing (an interpretation which Grandgent's note does not mention): to express, that is, a comparison between the sea and this "river" as to their respective perilousness. Lucia, by this view, would thus be pointing to a *fiumana* over which the sea has no vaunt, because the sea, well-known for its dangerous storms, is not more dangerous than this *fiumana*.

But no one of those who have held (in answer to the first question) that this *fiumana* is not Acheron, appears to have seen (in answer to the second question) that for that very reason it is appropriately said of this "stream" that the sea has no vaunt over it since it does not, in truth, flow into the sea. And, if this is the correct view of the meaning of the whole verse (as I believe it is), then the usual two explanations must be acknowledged to be half right and half wrong.

But the question is, I think, a larger one than that of the meaning of a single verse. Our focus on this one verse cannot but reflect our view of the whole beginning of this poem. And if our reading hangs up at this particular place in Canto II, it may well be that we have not really read Canto I as it is to be read. The answer to the question "what is the *fiumana*?" must necessarily involve our understanding of the ontology of things on this first stage of the poem's action. It may be that the *fiumana* is not really the same thing as the *selva oscura*, contrary to what most commentators hold-

9. Dante's *Divine Comedy*, with introduction and notes by Ch. H. Grandgent, Heath, 1934 (revised edition), *ad loc. cit.* The reference to Flamini II indicates: F. Flamini, *I Significati reconditi della Commedia di Dante e il suo fine supremo*, Livorno, 1903, II, 25. The article by Flamini in *Giornal dantesco* cited by Grandgent is superseded by the discussion of the *fiumana* in both the first and second volumes of the larger work.

10. For further comment of Flamini's particular explanation see note 17 below.

ing the one view would suggest. But it is surely clear that this *fumana* may not belong to a different kind of reality than the *selva*, or, for that matter, than the *cammino* of the first verse. All three, "river," "wood," and "road," belong to a stage which is *this* life, *our* life; all three have their existence in *time*. The poem has not said (and will not say) where these things are located in relation to that other eternal world *outside of time*, in which Acheron flows (beyond the fact that Hell, of course, is beneath and within the earth); the reason for this being that the poem cannot afford to give to this initial stage too local an habitation. We do not reach the doorway to Hell by setting out from a place which might be pointed to on a map (in contrast with the place of departure for Purgatory).<sup>11</sup> We may not; in fact, say, before we have reached the door of Hell, *where* we are. We are on the *road of our life*, wherever that road may be said to run in space and time.

Wherever that is, the poem begins there; and finds, from that point, its reality as it goes. The stage is *there*; but where *there* is, you may not say. The real sun, to be sure, shines down upon this place;<sup>12</sup> and before we leave it, an historical person, Vergil, has stepped out upon it.<sup>13</sup> Even so, we are here in a region where things are, as yet, not very dense or heavy as things, are seen in a kind of half light; and where some things, at least, have a quite special way of being, a way quite unlike that of some other things in the eternal world ahead (which we enter in Canto III) where, for instance, Dante's living feet will dislodge stones from a slope or his living hands pull locks of hair from the frozen head of a traitor. The poem earns, as it goes, the density which things may have through Hell. But the beginning of the poem was back in another world, back in this world, in a *cammin di nostra vita* which may not be charted on any map, neither may this dark wood nor the valley nor this hill be found on any map. Nor is any one of the three beasts who are met there such as would be hunted by any but a Hound who is yet to come and who is, in fact, not a hound.

In view of the very nature of this opening situation in the poem, may we not wonder a little at those commentators who observe, when Lucia points down to the river over which the struggle with death can be seen, that Dante had not mentioned this river before (as if it were some oversight on the part of the poet)? But what of the *cammin di nostra vita*, was it men-

11. Which is, as Casella explains in *Purgatorio*, II, 100-102, at the mouth of the Tiber: *dove l'acqua di Tevere s'insala*.

12. *Inferno*. I, 37-40:

*Temp'era dal principio del mattino,  
e'l sol montava'n su con quelle stelle  
ch'eran con lui, quando l'amor divino  
mosse di prima quelle cose belle.*

13. *Ibid.*, II, 67-72:

*Rispuosemi: "Non omo, omo già fui,  
e li parenti miei furon lombardi,  
mantovani per patria ambedui.  
Nacqui sub Julio . . .*

tioned before? What of the *dark wood* and the *valley* and the *hill* and the *three beasts*, had they been mentioned—before they were mentioned?

They had. But that was outside of the poem and before the poem was written. Had Jeremiah not spoken of the *three beasts*?<sup>14</sup> Had not a *hill*<sup>15</sup> and a *valley*<sup>16</sup> been mentioned by others? These things have, first of all, the reality that words themselves have. They have meaning outside the poem, like words. But they are not *mere* words or *mere* metaphors, if by such a qualification one means that they do not denote *real* things. The "road of life" is not less real (I speak as the poem speaks) for not being found on any map. Such words and metaphors do not point to fictions but to realities. And if we speak here of allegory, it may not be of that kind of allegory that begins in a fiction, that is an acknowledged *creation* of poets.<sup>17</sup> Beatrice is not urged here by Lucia to look down upon that kind of world, from Heaven.

The *fiumana* which Beatrice sees when she looks down has, and must have, a reality commensurate with the things among which it exists. It, like the *road of life* and the *wood* and the *hill*, is recognizable in the poem because it has an existence already established outside of the poem. There are a good many citations to be made in evidence of that fact.<sup>18</sup> But no

14. *Jeremiah*, V: 6: "Idcirco percussit eos leo de silva, lupus ad vesperam vastavit eos, pardus vigilans super civitates eorum: omnis qui egressus fuerit ex eis, capietur."

15. Alanus de Insulis, *Distinctiones dictionum theol.*, PL 210, 746: "*Collis* . . . Dicitur vita aeterna propter eminentiam gloriae, unde inter benedictiones Jacob, in illa scilicet quam fecit Joseph, dicitur: *Benedictiones patris tui confortatae sunt benedictionibus patrum ejus, donec veniret desiderium collium aeternorum* (Gen. 49, 26) id est aeterna vita desiderata a sanctis, quae per colles significatur et dicitur multipliciter propter diversitatem beatitudinum, etc."

16. *Ibid.*, s.v. *Vallis*: "*Vallis*, proprie. Dicitur Jerusalem, quae propter peccatorum dejectionem dicitur *Vallis*, unde *Isaias*: *Onus vallis visionis*. Dicitur mundus, unde *David*: *in valle lacrymarum, in loco quem posuit*."

17. In his explanation of the allegory of the *Divine Comedy*, Flaminio's basic assumption is that the *first* meaning, the *senso letterale*, is given to us as a fiction; and that this sense is always autonomous and distinct from the *other* sense. Cf. the opening words of the second volume: "Il senso letterale della *Commedia* . . . è da tener sempre nettamente distinto dall'allegorico. Ciascuno di essi ci rappresenta una azione per se stante, che s'inizia, si svolge, e termina senza framettersi all'altra."

This, of course, is the allegorical method of the *Convivio*. But it is precisely when applied to such "things" as the *selva oscura* and the *fiumana* that the falseness of such an approach to the allegory of the *Divine Comedy* is most apparent. Flaminio's *fitizio per se stante* has brought him so to materialize the existence of these things (so that they may stand alone) that he can draw a map (!) showing just where the *wood*, the *valley*, and the *hill* are located; and then to put in the *fiumana* where he thinks it ought to be in relation to these (cf. *op. cit.*, vol. I and his article in *Gior. dant.*, X, 145.) True, he makes an effort to distinguish as to *kinds* of fiction (cf. I, 58); but he never retrieves his general explanation from the first false assumption of a *senso letterale* which is *puro fitizio*. This, of course, is too large a question for a footnote to deal with. But I am firmly convinced that the conception of allegory which informs the *Convivio* may be applied to the *Divine Comedy* (or the *Vita nuova*, for that matter), only at the price of gravely distorting a proper conception of the whole poem.

18. Many of those commentators who understand the *fiumana* to be a metaphor (and not Acheron) concern themselves, of course, with its *true* meaning and in doing so cite

long array of them is required. I choose two only; and I am not aware that their relevance to the figure of the *fiumana* in question and to the whole opening situation of the poem has heretofore been noticed:

"Convincuntur postremo experientia propriae infirmitatis et concupiscentiae." Agnoscis, ut puto, errorem: et utinam emendent te renes tui (*Psal.* xv, 7), ut melius agnoscas, et agnoscendo petas, et petendo obtineas spiritum intellectus et consilii et timoris, quo sapientior evadas, quo fias cautior et Domino subiectior. Haec, fratres, etsi non tractarem, alius tamen esset qui vos erudiret: et apud vosmetipsos tractatores essetis. Si enim, quod avertat Deus, in tam crassum et stupidum errorem prolapsi essetis, ut a natura vobis intellectum tribui putaretis, quem a sola gratia et misericordia Dei habetis, emendarent vos renes vestri, et clamarent. Quare ascendunt cogitationes hujusmodi in cor vestrum (*Luc.* xxiv, 38)? Unusquisque se ipsum consulat, se ipsum palpet, scrutetur, nec se quaesierit extra: interroget renes suos, et dicent illi, fuisse legem in membris meis contrariam legi mentis meae (*Rom.* vii, 23); *pronus sum ad omne flagitium, ita me obruunt concupiscentiae fluctus, ut quotidie mergar, et in profundum peccatorum ruam.* Ascendit invidia, ascendit superbia, ascendit luxuria, agmine facto miserum petunt: si Charybdim declinaverim, Scyllam incurro; si libidinem propulso, irae succumbo; si non me domat avaritia, caedit ebrietas; si rapinis abstineo, manum et viscera pauperibus claudio; si calumniis aures obduco, mors intrat per fenestras, hoc est, per oculos libidinum et voluptatum incentiva haurio; denique si rimam unam obturo, centum patent, quibus accipiam inimicum imbrem et tandem fatiscam. Haec sunt quae apud te tractant renes tui, et propria infirmitate conscii erudiunt te, increpant te, emendant te, et usque in noctem. Qualem noctem? Conscientiae tuae caliginosae, cujus tenebris involutus velles, si posses, his quasi clypeum adversus lumen veritatis obtendere, et de fortitudine tua bene sperare.<sup>19</sup>

The death which struggled against the poet was surely that same death of which Augustine here speaks. And the night (*là dove il sol tace*) was

texts some of which are relevant to the context here and some of which are not. Any thorough gloss would of course point out other outcroppings of this or a similar metaphor elsewhere in Dante, e.g. (besides the *lago del cor* and the *pelago* referred to below):

*Paradiso*, XXVI, 55-63:

.....  
tratto m'hanno del mar dell'amor torto  
e del dritto m'han posto alla riva.

*Paradiso*, XXVII, 121-123:

O cupidigia che i mortali affonde  
sotto te, che nessuno ha potere  
di trarre li occhi fuor de le tue onde.

*De monarchia*, III, XVI:

Et cum ad hunc portum vel nulli vel pauci,  
et hii cum difficultate nimia pervenire possint  
nisi sedatis fluctibus blande cupiditatis . . .

In fine, whatever we may say the exact meaning of the *fiumana* is, we have long had before our eyes enough evidence of "waters" which are clearly not those of Acheron.

I should think that a very good case might be made for the view that the *fiumana* is a kind of *prefiguration* on the scene of this life of the river Acheron in the other world, just as the *colle* of this same scene may be a *figura* of the mountain of *Purgatory*. But that is quite another and larger matter.

19. Augustine, *Sermo CCCLXV*, PL 39, 1645.



surely this same night. (Qualem noctem? Conscientiae tuae caliginosae. . .) For the poet is just such an one as Augustine has sketched, he is man succumbing to man's own infirmities till help proceeding from grace has come. And here is surely our *fiumana*: *concupiscentiae fluctus*. All is here except the Wolf driving the victim back into the night. But in the poem the Wolf herself is *concupiscentia* (or includes that meaning) and in Augustine's picture it is the water itself that rises and threatens to engulf the victim. No matter, the waters are the same. And they are indeed waters over which the sea may have no boast, for these waters do not flow down to the sea.

But to come to the second question: those commentators who refused to take this river for Acheron, why did they also reject the explanation that this "river" does not flow into the sea; and why did they *all* choose to see in the words *ove'l mar non ha vanto* the above-noted comparison with the sea as to perilousness? Did they think that Lucia might not point to this river with that qualifying phrase and *locate* it for Beatrice (and for the reader)? Might Beatrice (and the reader) not be told to look for this river, not in the world which we call the visible world, but precisely in that world which we call the invisible (see Augustine's "unusquisque se ipsum consulat, . . . interroget renes suos" above). Whatever the answer may be as to the mind of the commentators, a passage in which Hugh of St. Victor speaks of these two worlds will, I think, strongly suggest that we should regard the matter of this *fiumana* and its whereabouts in just such terms:

Sicut duo opera, id est opera conditionis, et opera restaurationis distinximus, ita duos mundos esse intelligamus visibilem et invisibilem. Visibilem quidem hanc machinam universitatis, quam corporeis oculis cernimus, invisibilem vero cor hominis quod videre non possumus. Et sicut in diebus Noe aquae diluvii universam terram operuerunt, sola autem arca aquis superferebatur, et non solum mergi non poterat, verum etiam quanto amplius aquae intumescabant, tanto altius in sublime elevabatur, ita et nunc intelligamus in corde hominis concupiscentiam huius mundi esse, quasi quasdam aquas diluvii; arcam vero, quae desuper ferebatur, fidem Christi, quae transitoriam delectationem calcatur, et ad ea quae sursum sunt, aeterna bona anhelat. Ideo autem aquis concupiscentia huius mundi comparatur, quia fluxa est et lubrica, et ad similitudinem aquae deorsum currentis semper ima petit, suosque sequaces instabiles et dissolutos reddit. Si intraverit homo ad cor suum, videre poterit quomodo semper et concupiscentia deorsum in ea quae transitoria sunt, defluat.<sup>20</sup>

Hugh goes on here to speak of the perils of such waters as these in the heart of man and of shipwreck in them. But the primary fact is that these waters belong, in their first reality, to that invisible world which is the heart of man. (. . . Invisibilem vero cor hominis quod videre non possumus. . . Si intraverit homo ad cor suum videre poterit quomodo semper et concupiscentia deorsum in ea quae transitoria sunt, defluat). But to Santa Lucia or to Beatrice, the heart of man is not an invisible place, if

20. *De arca Noe morali*, I, vi (PL 176, 672 ff.).

they but choose to scrutinize it from Heaven; nor is it invisible to the eye of a poet, if he but choose to look therein. It is there, in the heart of man, that the waters of cupidity for this world flow.

In Canto I, mention was already made of a "lake of the heart" in which fear had prevailed throughout the night spent in the dark wood. And, following upon this image, had come that of one who, winning the shore, turns to look back upon the perilous flood which he has escaped:

*Allor fu la paura un poco queta  
che nel lago del cor m'era durata  
la notte ch'io passai con tanta pietà.  
E come quei che con lena affannata  
uscito fuor del pelago alla riva  
si volge all'acqua perigliosa e guata,  
così l'animo mio ch'ancor fuggiva,  
si volse a retro a rimirar lo passo  
che non lasciò giammai persona viva.<sup>21</sup>*

Here too are images illuminated and appropriately glossed by Hugh's words above and by Augustine's. The "lake of the heart" and this "pass that never left anyone alive" (a *pelago* in metaphor) also hold waters which do not flow down to the sea.<sup>22</sup> But, if the passages from Augustine and from Hugh of St. Victor serve most specifically to say *what* this *fumana* is that is seen from Heaven (concupiscentiae fluctus; concupiscentia hujus mundi); and also to say where that "river" flows (in the heart of man); some reader may still ask, though it be obvious and granted that this is a river which does not flow into the sea, why just that fact need be so emphatically brought out by the phrase that completes the verse: *ove'l mar non ha vanto*? Why, in fine, should Santa Lucia declare the obvious?

But there is the question: is it the obvious? The commentaries, even the early ones, are witness to the contrary. There would appear to be very good reason for defining this river as much as it may be defined. The Hill, one recalls, is defined as *principio e cagion di ogni gioia*. Its summit is lighted by that planet *che mena dritto altrui per ogni calle*. The "river" must be at least as clearly marked for recognition as that: a river *ove'l mar non ha vanto*. It is a river (and this we must know as readers if we are to understand) in which there is no water.

I model the phrase on a citation from *Zacharias* which St. Augustine makes in the *City of God*:

*Tu quoque in sanguine testamenti tui emisisti vinetos tuos de lacu in quo non est aqua*

21. *Inferno*, I, 19-27.

22. The development of the *pelago* image out of the *lago del cor* and that of the *fumana* out of both deserves a more detailed examination than it is opportune to give here.

23. *De civitate Dei*, L. xviii, c. xxxv: *De trium prophetarum vaticinio, id est Aggaei, Zachariae et Malachiae*: "Alio loco ad ipsum Christum in spiritu prophetiae loquens [Zacharias] de remissione peccatorum per eius sanguinem: *Tu quoque, inquit, in sanguine*



a phrase, identifying a certain "lake," which suggests the pattern by which we may understand Lucia's phrase identifying a certain "river": *ove'l mar non ha vanto*.

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*testamenti tui emisisti vinctos tuos de lacu, in quo non est aqua.* Quid per hunc lacum velit intellegi, possunt diversa sentiri etiam secundum rectam fidem. Mihi tamen videtur non eo significari melius, nisi humanae miseriae profunditatem siccam quodam modo et sterilem, ubi non sunt fluentia iustitiae, sed iniquitatis lutum. De hoc quippe etiam in psalmo dicitur: *Et eduxit me de lacu miseriae et de luto limi.*" The citation from Zecharia is IX: 11.

This lake is mentioned many times over in *Psalms*, and by the prophets. Also elsewhere by Augustine: *PL* 37, 1111; and *PL* 36, 223 (*Enarratio in Psal. xxx*) where we read: "*Domine, reduxisti ab inferis animam meam.* Non opus est ut exponatur. *Salvum fecisti me a descendantibus in lacum.* Qui sunt qui descendant in lacum? Omnes peccatores mergentes in profundum: lacus est enim profunditas saeculi. Quae est ista profunditas saeculi? Abundantia luxuriae et nequitiae: qui ergo libidinibus sese immergunt et terrenis desideris, descendant in lacum."

## LA SOURCE DE LA NOUVELLE 55 DE L'HEPTAMÉRON

PAS D'OUVRAGE moins livresque que l'*Heptaméron* à une époque où toute littérature est livresque *ad nauseam*. "De peur que la beaulté de la rethorique fait tort en quelque partie à la verité de l'histoire" (Prologue), Marguerite s'était promis de ne faire raconter que des histoires vraies à ses devisants, qui ne sont pas gens de lettres. Et en effet, la plupart des nouvelles s'inspirent de faits divers de son temps; à celles qui semblent faire exception, la reine sait leur donner cette couleur de chose arrivée, c'est-à-dire ce ton psychologique de bon aloi ou cet accent de sincérité "évangélique" qui permettent à l'historien averti d'accepter comme document une nouvelle telle la 10<sup>e</sup> ("Histoire d'Amador et de Floride") dont l'allure romanesque paraît pourtant évidente au lecteur ordinaire.<sup>1</sup> Même la Nouvelle 70, empruntée au poème de *La Chastelaine de Vergy*, garde aussi cette qualité de vraisemblance et de naturel qui est bien la marque distinctive du recueil. La reine a réussi ce tour de force; car c'en est un au moment où elle écrit, ne l'oublions pas.

Aux dires de l'auteur (exception faite de la Nouvelle 70) l'*Heptaméron* n'aurait pas de sources écrites. N'empêche qu'on lui en trouve quelquefois et dans des endroits les plus inattendus. Le "sourcier" se plaint après quatre cents ans à prendre en défaut Longarine ou Nomerfide qui, elles aussi, avaient bien "juré de rien mettre icy qui ayt esté escript" (Nouvelle 69, discussion). Par exemple, la Nouvelle 38<sup>2</sup> semble empruntée à *La Louenge de mariaige et recueil des hystoires des bonnes, vertueuses et illustres femmes*, ouvrage bien inconnu aujourd'hui mais qui ne l'était pas tout à fait au 16<sup>e</sup> siècle puisqu'il se trouve sur la liste des livres prohibés par la Faculté de

1. C'est le désaccord de longue date entre le spécialiste de la Renaissance et le lecteur ordinaire qui a poussé M. Lucien Febvre, par exemple, à écrire tels chapitres de son étude *Autour de l'Heptaméron*, Paris, Gallimard, 1944, pp. 191-213. Mais l'éminent spécialiste et le lecteur moderne se rencontrent en M. Febvre historien lorsqu'il déclare que les faits, détails, traits de mœurs de la nouvelle 10 "sont contés avec une telle simplicité, une telle tranquillité, une telle sérénité que nous les sentons vrais d'instinct, même si nous connaissons mal le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle" (p. 204). Oui, instinct ou plutôt flair de l'historien qui connaît bien le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, mais non pas instinct du lecteur ordinaire qui se sent dépaycé dès les premières pages de l'*Heptaméron*.

Il faut le dire et redire, la plupart des contes de la reine de Navarre se proposent d'agiter des questions religieuses, morales et sociales, toutes liées à l'"évangélisme" du temps, toutes bien étrangères à l'esprit du lecteur formé à l'école du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, siècle qui n'est pas pour rien dans la création de la légende de l'*Heptaméron*, livre "galant," licencieux et polisson! Au lieu d'essayer de le comprendre, on lui a collé une étiquette qui ne se décolle pas de sitôt. Il nous manque une monographie sur la légende de l'*Heptaméron* et il est à souhaiter qu'on en incorpore les éléments essentiels dans une prochaine édition des nouvelles de Marguerite.

2. Cf. E. V. Telle, "Une Autre Source de la Nouvelle 38 de l'*Heptaméron*," dans *RR*, XXV, (1934) 375.

Théologie de Louvain en 1546.<sup>3</sup> Sûr moyen de le faire remarquer! Marguerite ne put sans doute résister à l'attrait de l'auteur défendu et du même Lesnauderie lut l'*Epistola incitativa ad vitam contemplativam activamque fugiendam* de quelques années antérieure à *La Louenge de mariaige*, ouvrages aux titres significatifs pour quiconque s'intéressait à cette captivante question de mariage. Et qui plus que Marguerite s'y intéressait! C'est dans ce mince livret de douze petits feuillets qui ressasse de moyenâgeux lieux communs sur les défauts des femmes parce que le mariage couperait le chemin des bénéfices ecclésiastiques à Maistre Zacharie Legouez, scribe de l'université de Caen, c'est là que la reine a trouvé le sujet ou pour mieux dire le canevas de la Nouvelle 55.

Je reproduis ce texte, non qu'il mérite de sortir des ténèbres, mais pour que le seizième siècle voie ce que Marguerite en a fait.

... et tales mulieres non communicant bona eisdem viris sed magis subtrahunt et appropriant sibi ipsi in vita pariter et in morte: Unde narratur de quodam simplici qui moriturus condidit testamentum. Et inter alia dixit uxori suae quod venderet unum bovem et daret precium pro anima sua. Mulier viro mortuo accepit cattam et bovem et duxit eos ad forum. Et cum ibi esset, quidam voluit emere bovem. Et ipsa respondit: "Nullus, inquit, bovem emet nisi emat cattam." Alius respondit quod libenter emeret bovem sed de cattam non curabat. Illa asseruit sicut prius quod nullo modo venderet eos nisi conjunctim. Cui ille: "Et quomodo ergo habebis ambos? Cattam, inquit mulier, tu emes pro una marcha quia est michi preciosior sed bovem habebis pro obolo." Recepta pecunia, precium cattae retinuit mulier et obolum quem pro bove acceperat dedit pro anima viri sui. Vide fidem mulieris.<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Relisons maintenant la Nouvelle 55 sans omettre la conversation qui la commente. On est immédiatement frappé de l'habileté avec laquelle la reine fait sortir d'un texte et contexte secs et misogames une anecdote très vivante à l'honneur d'une épouse "non plus sotte que les Espagnoles ont

3. Fr. H. Reusch, *Die Indices librorum prohibitorum des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen, 1886, p. 42.

4. *Epistola incitativa*..., s.l.n.d., pet. in-12° (goth.) 12 feuillets non chiffrés (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Réserve, p.R.410) fol. 9 recto.—Puisque Lesnauderie dit lui-même avoir écrit à Caen en août 1520 *La Louenge de mariaige* (Paris, Pierre Sergent, s. d. in-4°, fol. 72 v°-73.—B.N., Paris, Rés., m.R.86) à l'intention de "son voysin familier et disciple" qui alors approchait de la trentaine, l'*Epistola* doit dater de 1510 environ: "Maistre Zacharie mon amy je vous escriptz quelque chose en francoys affin que les femmes l'entendent. Car ce que je vous ay aultresfoys escript en latin touchant la vie contemplative ce a esté pour vous inciter a servir a dieu le createur. Mais je ne desprise pas pourtant la vie active: cest assavoir lestat de mariage." (*La Louenge*..., fol. Ai v°).—Ce livre-ci n'est d'ailleurs qu'une copie presque textuelle de *La Nef des dames vertueuses* (1503), du médecin lyonnais Symphorien Champier. Nulle part Lesnauderie ne souffle mot ni de sa dette ni de Champier; ce qui est assez surprenant, même si l'on considère les habitudes de l'époque, car le livre de Champier était très connu et venait d'être réédité à Paris en mai 1515. L'histoire de la Dame de Darambon qui paraît être la source de la Nouvelle 38 de l'*Heptaméron* est une des rares additions originales de Lesnauderie à *La Nef* de Champier.

accoutumé d'estre" et qui a étudié et compris saint Paul comme Marguerite elle-même le comprenait.

Avait-elle le texte de Lesnauderie sous les yeux lorsqu'elle composa la Nouvelle 55? C'est possible, mais assez improbable. Elle ne s'est jamais embarrassée de livres. Mais elle l'a lu, c'est certain. Quoi qu'il en soit, c'est la première fois qu'il nous est donné de voir en clair les procédés techniques utilisés par la reine: la trame fournie par Lesnauderie fait toucher du doigt son "invention." La voici:

Le cadre: Marguerite situe le récit en Espagne. Choix délibéré ou dû au hasard? Souci d'exotisme? Peu importe. Choix heureux pour nous puisque la source première du conte doit être d'origine orientale.

Les personnages: d'un pauvre diable de paysan bien intentionné la reine fait un riche marchand dont la fortune n'était pas toute honnêtement acquise. A la place du bœuf, elle substitue bien entendu un cheval que le futur acheteur aura déjà vu et désiré. Il lui faut un troisième personnage: le domestique qui, ayant assisté à l'agonie de son maître et entendu ses dernières recommandations, écoutera les instructions de la veuve sur la façon de vendre chat et cheval. C'est lui, comme il sied, et non la dame, qui mènera la marchandise au marché. Les autres personnages, bien qu'ils ne fassent que passer au fond de la scène, mais autrement importants car eux aussi passent en jugement, sont les prêtres et les cordeliers qui ont fait croire au mourant que la charité posthume pourrait lui servir de pénitence véritable "comme si Dieu donnait sa grâce pour argent."<sup>6</sup>

Les caractères: en traits incisifs et ironiques, Marguerite dessine le personnage du mari et de sa femme. Le marchand est pris de remords *in extremis*, non sincères et peut-être superflus parce que la vie le quittait et

5. Ne prenons pas ce trait à la légère. Trait acéré que la reine reprend dans la discussion: "... vous verrez ordinairement les plus grands usuriers qui soient poinct, faire les plus belles et triomphantes chapelles que l'on scauroit veoir, voulans apaiser Dieu pour cent mille ducatz de larcin de dix mille ducatz de edifices, comme si Dieu ne scauoit compter." Pour bien saisir la portée d'un tel reproche, il faudrait que le lecteur ordinaire de l'*Heptaméron* sût que l'air de 1510-1550 était saturé de "paulinisme," imprégné de commentaires sur la Bible prônant l'efficacité et la beauté du culte en esprit au détriment de la religion cérémonielle.

Lefèvre d'Etaples, qui fut un des guides spirituels de Marguerite—et peut-être le plus écouté—ne se lasse pas d'insister sur la transformation, cette *metamorphosis*, que doit être celle du pécheur vraiment repentant, et où la pénitence au sens ordinaire du mot (la *satisfactio*) en tant qu'œuvre, ne peut tout au plus que *préparer* la voie à la pénitence, à cette résipiscence et conversion en Dieu, seule digne du nom de pénitence:

"Est enim *metamorphosis*, resipiscencia, sententiae mutatio, conversio reversioque ad deum, motio quae praeivo fit spiritus sancti adventu, sanctum et desiderabile nomen: non carnis afflictio, non maceratio, non denique mactatio, etsi illam sanctum *resipiscencia* quandoque haec sequantur ut signum, et illa poenitentia est: quae toties designatur in prophetis per haec verba dei, convertere, convertimini, revertere, revertimini ad me et similibus miserantissimi dei ad se revocationibus."

*Commentarii initiatorii in quatuor Evangelia*, Meaux, Simon de Colines, 1522, in folio, *Matth.*, III, 2, §17, fol. 12 (B.N., Rés. A. 1162). Voir aussi le commentaire sur l'Épître aux Hébreux, VI, 6, dans *Epistolae beati Pauli*, H. Estienne, 1512, in-folio, fol. 240 (B.N., Vélins 89).

"qu'il ne pouvait plus tenir ses biens." "L'avarice des prestres"—il faut lire aussi l'avarice des Franciscains—le convainc facilement qu'il pourra s'assurer une place en Paradis au moyen d'une œuvre facile à faire en somme puisqu'il s'en décharge sur ses héritiers, lui qui sa vie durant ne fit jamais la charité, qui "n'eust pas voulu donner ung escu en extrême nécessité, comme vous scavez." "Les premières larmes gectées," la dame qui a "tant aymé" (sic) son mari, estime que le deuil d'un époux est suffisant et ne justifie pas aussi la perte d'un beau cheval d'Espagne. Sans scrupules, et sans même prendre conseil de son confesseur, elle interprète au détriment des cordeliers, dans un sens personnel et "paulinien" les intentions du défunt, qui aurait donné raison à sa femme . . . "s'il eust vescu quinze jours davantage." Vérité de La Palisse, suggère Marguerite.

L'action: un triptyque. Les derniers moments du marchand—L'interprétation du legs par la dame: ici, pour appuyer sur la leçon à enseigner, la reine utilise à son habitude le style direct—Enfin la scène au marché: narration rapide et amusante conversation entre chaland et vendeur "son chat entre ses bras" (!) où Marguerite n'a aucune peine à faire oublier celle de Lesnauderie.

Conclusion: satisfaction de la dame au retour du serviteur qui a bien rempli sa mission. Bon tour joué aux moines; déjouée leur rapacité au chevet des mourants. Tout cela est dit sobrement, lestement, d'une façon déjà classique, en vue de l'effet final et surtout de la leçon "évangélique" que nous prépare cette bonne Parlamente aux dépens des cordeliers (voir aussi Nouvelle 56) et, je dirai presque, de Lesnauderie\* qu'elle a dépossédé de son histoire.

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6. Notons que pour un recueil de 72 contes sans sources certaines (hormis une demi-douzaine, cf. P. Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême, Reine de Navarre, étude biographique et littéraire*, Champion, 1930, II, 749, 754) deux proviennent de Lesnauderie. Ce n'était d'ailleurs pas un inconnu au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle (cf. supra note 3) et Jean de Nevizan cite souvent le traité latin de Lesnauderie *Opusculum de doctoribus et privilegiis eorum*, Paris, François Regnault, et Caen, Michel Angier, 1516, dans sa fameuse *Sylva nuptialis*, cf. édition de Lyon, Ant. Vincent, 1548, in-8° (B.N., F. 27629), pp. 7, 8, 9, 341. Sur ce recteur de l'université de Caen, voir A. Tilley, *The University of Caen and the Renaissance* dans *Studies in the French Renaissance*, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 10-11.

## ANOTHER VIEW OF ZOLA'S *L'ŒUVRE*

SINCE the appearance of Zola's *L'Œuvre* in 1885-1886, critics have dwelt at length on two major aspects of the book: the identification of its central character, Claude Lantier, with the painter Paul Cézanne; and Zola's alleged incomprehension of Cézanne's artistic genius. Beginning with the interpretation of *L'Œuvre* given by Ambroise Vollard, the art dealer who redeemed Cézanne's work from twenty years of obscurity, the idea grew steadily that Zola had intended *L'Œuvre* to be a traitorous caricature of his old companion, an unexpected and devastating attack from the ambush of thirty years of friendship.<sup>1</sup> Vollard's interpretation of Zola's novel, biased and unfair as it was, was supported by the accounts of such men as Gustave Coquiot<sup>2</sup> and Emile Bernard,<sup>3</sup> who like Vollard had known Cézanne in his last years, and was carried on by later biographers such as Georges Rivière,<sup>4</sup> René Huyghe<sup>5</sup> and John Rewald.<sup>6</sup> The view first advanced by Vollard and his immediate followers was so widely accepted that Denise LeBlond-Zola herself, the novelist's daughter, could make the flat statement in 1931 that "Claude Lantier, c'est Paul Cézanne. Evidemment, tout le monde le sait. . . ."<sup>7</sup>

Her view, however, with that of her predecessors, was considerably modified by the patient and intelligent researches of Gerstle Mack in 1935.<sup>8</sup> His findings indicate that the present-day literary historian must adopt a much more cautious view of those biographical elements in *L'Œuvre* which were allegedly borrowed from the life and character of Cézanne. They tend to show that Joachim Gasquet, the poet who was one of Cézanne's few intimates in his last years, had been right in his contention that if Lantier did indeed represent Cézanne at all, it was the youthful painter only and not the mature colorist who revolutionized all of modern art.<sup>9</sup>

Yet in spite of Mack's excellent work on the biographical portions of *L'Œuvre*, the idea still persists that Zola was completely incapable of judging the art of Cézanne, that he saw in it a colossal if not ridiculous failure and caricatured the whole artistic impulse and effort of his compatriot in the paintings described in *L'Œuvre*. This belief can be found in nearly every one of the biographies of Cézanne, even in some of the soundest and most

1. Ambroise Vollard, *Paul Cézanne*, Paris, Galerie A. Vollard, 1914, *passim*.

2. Gustave Coquiot, *Paul Cézanne*, Paris, Ollendorff, 1919, *passim*.

3. Emile Bernard, *Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne*, Paris, Société des Trente, 1912, pp. 19-20.

4. Georges Rivière, *Le Maître Paul Cézanne*, Paris, Floury, 1923, *passim*.

5. René Huyghe, *Cézanne*, Paris, Plon, 1936, p. 16.

6. John Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola*, Paris, Sedrowski, 1936, *passim*.

7. Denise LeBlond-Zola, *Emile Zola raconté par sa fille*, Paris, Fasquelle, 1931, p. 141.

8. Gerstle Mack, *Paul Cézanne*, New York, Knopf, 1935, *passim*.

9. Joachim Gasquet, *Cézanne*, Paris, Bernheim-Jeune, 1926, p. 21.

recent of them.<sup>10</sup> But it is significant that the charge of non-comprehension and deliberate caricature is often made against Zola without a great deal of evidence to back it. It would seem that Zola's artistic blindness and base motives are accepted by most of Cézanne's supporters as proven fact or self-evident truth that needs no demonstration. Gustave Coquiot, while a little less restrained than most of the critics, presents an excellent example of their methods. In support of his clearly-implied claim that Zola could not understand Cézanne's art and judged it as an arrogant bourgeois Philistine would, he can offer only the most tenuous proof and indeed can present nothing from the novel itself that would demonstrate Zola's blindness or treachery. For instance, he says that when the Luxembourg gallery had rejected a portion of the Caillebotte bequest containing some of Cézanne's works, Zola "...éclata, très satisfait de voir que sa clairvoyance (in *L'Œuvre*) n'avait pas été longtemps en défaut."<sup>11</sup> His remark may of course be based on fact, but he does not bother to tell us where or when Zola "éclata" so that we might judge his reaction for ourselves. Another example of his method is provided by a letter which he declares (in 1919) that he received from Zola in 1886; in this letter, which he quotes verbatim in part, Zola is reported to have referred to the characters of *L'Œuvre* as representing "des vaincus que vous ne connaissez point sans doute."<sup>12</sup> But Coquiot cannot produce the letter—all he can do is "swear" he received it! Yet, on the basis of such unsatisfactory indications, he is quite ready to present a bitter and hateful indictment of Zola as a fool and knave, quite worthy of all the abuse heaped on him by the more conservative literary critics of the 'eighties and 'nineties. Georges Rivière, though doubtless acting in better faith than Coquiot, is equally harsh. He cannot cite any cogent argument from *L'Œuvre* itself, any more than Coquiot could, and in place of real proof alleges certain very damaging generalizations against the novelist which in truth have little to do with the work itself but which contribute materially to the widely-held idea that Zola was far too ignorant and limited, artistically speaking, to understand the work of his friend. He attributes Zola's courageous campaign in favor of the Impressionists in *Mon Salon* largely to motives of personal aggrandizement and declares that the whole business, in sum, did Cézanne no good at all,<sup>13</sup> a conclusion which is perhaps justified but which ignores Zola's very gallant attempt to aid his friends when all the artistic world was against them. As some of the same kind of "proof" that Zola neither understood Cézanne nor cared much to understand him, he cites some early advice that Zola gave Cézanne in which the novelist openly counseled his friend to paint like Paul Delaroche

10. Huyghe, *loc. cit.*; Lionello Venturi, *Cézanne, son art, son œuvre*, Paris, Rosenberg, 1936, p. 18; Rewald, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65; these among many others.

11. *Op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Op. cit.*, p. 34.



or Ary Scheffer.<sup>14</sup> It is true that Zola did make some such unfortunate suggestions to Cézanne, but Rivière might have been generous enough to note that they were made in the 'sixties, when Zola had not yet arrived at any sound or comprehensive aesthetic doctrine. For Rivière, Zola suffered from "indigence intellectuelle";<sup>15</sup> in painting he is nothing more than an "aveugle-né."<sup>16</sup> Lionello Venturi, in his otherwise excellent study of Cézanne's painting, advances this same idea of Zola's utter incompetence in matters of art and complete incomprehension of the efforts of Cézanne.<sup>17</sup> Matthew Josephson, Zola's popular biographer on this side of the water, expresses the same view of his subject;<sup>18</sup> many other Cézanne scholars besides Coquiott and Rivière do the same: John Rewald,<sup>19</sup> Emile Bernard,<sup>20</sup> René Huyghe,<sup>21</sup> Roger Fry<sup>22</sup> among others. But it is rare that any of them offers much proof of his contention; Zola's stupidity in matters of art is accepted by all of them as simply one of the *données* of their argument and none of them stops to inquire further into the matter. It is probable that all of them, even those who incline to believe that Lantier is not a complete portrait of Cézanne, base their claim squarely on their accepted idea that Zola was caricaturing not only Cézanne but Cézanne's artistic ideas in *L'Œuvre*. They are, in fine, expressing a prejudice and not a reasoned conclusion.

Now, it must be agreed from the outset that Zola possessed no great talent as a critic of art. The doctrines and observations contained in his chief critical work, *Mon Salon*, were probably the fruit of his conversations with Antoine Guillemet<sup>23</sup> and show neither much originality nor a deep understanding of the modern artistic movement in general. But Zola's limitations as an art critic may not, after all, have completely blinded him to the merits of Cézanne's work; at least it is difficult to infer from *L'Œuvre* or from anything else Zola wrote before 1885 that he regarded Cézanne as a hopeless failure. There is, to be sure, the remark he made in a letter to Baille in 1861 that "Paul peut avoir le génie d'un grand peintre, il n'aura jamais le génie de le devenir,"<sup>24</sup> but the circumstances under which the remark was made make it appear to be a *boulade* uttered in a moment of exasperation rather than a formal judgment of the character or talent of his companion. Another letter concedes that Cézanne has not yet made his

14. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

17. *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

18. Matthew Josephson, *Zola and His Time*, New York, Macaulay, 1928, p. 301.

19. *Op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

20. *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

21. *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

22. Roger Fry, *Cézanne*, London, Hogarth, 1927, p. 5.

23. Rivière, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

24. Emile Zola, *Lettres de jeunesse*, 1858-1871, in *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Maurice LeBlond, Paris, Bernouard, 1927-29, X, 218 (letter to Baille, dated August, 1861).



mark in the artistic world, but here Zola quite clearly says that he is well content to wait until success eventually comes to his friend.<sup>25</sup> His cordial words in the dedication to Cézanne of *Mon Salon* in 1866 would seem to indicate that he thought nothing but good things of Cézanne, both as a man and as an artist, and no pronouncement of his before 1885 proves that he had changed his mind by the time he wrote *L'Œuvre*. The only really damaging remark he ever made about Cézanne, as far as the printed record goes, was his reference to Cézanne in 1896 as a "génie avorté,"<sup>26</sup> but needless to say that phrase does not necessarily reflect his opinion of a decade earlier.

As a matter of fact, *L'Œuvre* itself, so often cited to prove Zola's incomprehension of Cézanne, provides no indication at all that he was contemptuous of his friend's art and dubious of his potentialities. In any case the paintings described and the artistic doctrines advanced in the novel can scarcely be alleged as proof of Zola's pessimistic view of Cézanne's future as an artist since they obviously have little or nothing to do with the technique or ideology of Cézanne as we know them today. In *L'Œuvre* a great many paintings are mentioned but only seven are described in any detail. They include Lantier's first painting, *Plein-Air*, which unquestionably is nothing more than a literary transposition of Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*;<sup>27</sup> four paintings of Parisian life, naturalistic in conception and impressionistic in execution, as Zola describes them; a small study of the head of a dead child, recalling Courbet in manner and Delacroix or some other romantic in subject; and finally the great unfinished work of Lantier's maturity, the painting that brings him to his final failure and suicide. The first six, quite evidently, were imagined from Zola's general stock of memories of romantic, realistic and impressionistic paintings; not one of them can be traced to any specific composition of Cézanne's and indeed not only their subject matter but even their manner and execution, as Zola describes them, seem to place them quite outside Cézanne's work, at least the work of that confident and mature period which followed 1870 or 1873.

The evolution of the last, unfinished painting in *L'Œuvre* is of some importance in determining whether or not Zola had Cézanne in mind as he composed the figure of Lantier. The work begins in the painter's mind as a thoroughly naturalistic study of the contrasts of the life of Paris, the workers of the Port Saint-Nicolas on one side ("Paris qui travaille"), on the other the swimming pool on the Seine ("Paris qui s'amuse"), with a small boat in the center to serve the technical needs of the composition. But as the painting progresses it takes on a clearly hallucinatory character:

25. *Ibid.*, p. 285 (letter to Coste, 26 July 1866).

26. In an article on modern painting published in *Le Figaro* in May, 1896 (cited by Rewald, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151).

27. It is true that Cézanne also painted a *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* in imitation of Manet's, but this painting did not contain the nude figure that is the most striking detail of Manet's composition.

Les fonds, les quais, la Seine, d'où montait la pointe triomphale de la Cité, demeuraient à l'état d'ébauche, mais d'ébauche magistrale, comme si le peintre avait eu peur de gâter le Paris de son rêve, en le finissant davantage . . . Seulement, la barque des femmes, au milieu, trouait le tableau d'un flamboiement de chairs qui n'étaient pas à leur place; et la grande figure nue surtout, peinte dans la fièvre, avait un éclat, un grandissement d'hallucination d'une fausseté étrange et déconcertante, au milieu des réalités voisines.<sup>28</sup>

And, when Claude's mania has seized him completely and changed him from a painter into a dervish of art, the central nude of the picture gradually evolves into a symbolic vision of eroticism, lust, concupiscence:

. . . ces cuisses se doraient en colonnes de tabernacle, ce ventre devenait un astre, éclatant de jaune et de rouge purs, splendide et hors de la vie. Une . . . étrange nudité d'ostensor, où des pierreries semblaient luire . . .<sup>29</sup>

When at last Claude sees his work clearly, just before his suicide, the nude has become the complete symbol of insatiable desire:

. . . la Femme, vue ainsi d'en bas, avec quelques pas de recul, l'emplissait de stupeur. Qui donc venait de peindre cette idole d'une religion inconnue? qui l'avait faite de métaux, de marbres, et de gemmes, épanouissant la rose mystique de son sexe, entre les colonnes précieuses des cuisses, sous la voûte sacrée du ventre?<sup>30</sup>

Such a painting as this is certainly not typical of the works of the mature Cézanne. The characteristics of the composition, as defined by Zola, are clear: it is a highly "literary" (that is, illustrative) work of intensely romantic conception, baroque in execution and strongly erotic in psychological significance, the exact opposite, in short, of the kind of composition Cézanne had been attempting for some fifteen years before 1885. It is undeniable, of course, that some of Cézanne's earliest works, composed during his first years in Paris, do reveal these same tendencies, for such paintings as *Le Pacha*, *Le Grog au vin*, *L'Enlèvement*, *Le Meurtre* and some others of like style, reveal that Cézanne, as a disciple of Delacroix, occasionally exhibited a morbid and frenetic romanticism, a baroque manner that caused the successive juries of the Salon to regard him as little more than a madman, a clearly-marked erotic tendency and a literary inspiration that makes it seem that at one time he regarded himself as something of a poet of the brush, a modern Giorgione.<sup>31</sup> But these tendencies had not manifested themselves in more than a small portion of even his early work (the Rivière catalogue indicates that only about a third of the paintings of his first

28. Emile Zola, *L'Œuvre*, in *Œuvres complètes*, XXVIII, 281-282. All references to *L'Œuvre* are made to this edition.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 376.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 380.

31. For discussions of Cézanne's early years, cf. Huyghe, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-37; Fry, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-28, 60-87; Barnes and De Mazia, *The Art of Cézanne*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939, pp. 3-105.

productive years were literary or romantic in conception) and the period in which he devoted himself to such compositions was comparatively short, stretching from his first visit to Paris to his year-long experience with the "motif" at L'Estaque during the war of 1870. After that fertile period of communion with nature in the open, and more especially after his fortunate stay with Pissarro at Pontoise in 1873-74, nearly all traces of the earlier inspiration were driven from his work.<sup>32</sup> After 1870-1873 he is the painter of nature, the colorist, the architect of design, no longer anything of a visionary poet on canvas. In the mature and more or less serene period immediately preceding 1885 Cézanne had banished all signs of literary inspiration from his work; his technique is "solid" and simple, his manner poles away from the baroque style of 1860-1870; the eroticism is so far eradicated from his paintings that the Baigneurs and the Baigneuses of the years after 1874 seem to possess almost no connection with real flesh and blood; they are purely architectonic details of the compositions, the perfect realization on canvas of Baudelaire's "vivants piliers" of the world.<sup>33</sup>

Zola of course could not have been ignorant of all these things, could not, in 1885, have seen in the work of his mature friend the ardent and hysterical visions of Giorgione and Delacroix. Granted that he was limited in his view of contemporary artistic movements, it seems impossible that he was so completely blind that he could not see how much Cézanne had changed after the War. It must be remembered that the two men had been in more or less close association during the twenty-five years that had elapsed between Cézanne's first visit to Paris and the publication of *L'Œuvre*. They had undoubtedly seen a good deal of each other in Paris (though the biographers of Cézanne, again without much real evidence to back their claims, have made much of a growing separation between the two) and Cézanne's visits to Médan were far from infrequent. He was there in 1879, working as usual; spent a week with Zola in 1880, visited again in 1881, passed five weeks there in 1882, and so on; during the very composition of *L'Œuvre* he was in the immediate vicinity of Médan for a few weeks and it is known that he visited Zola for some days during that time.<sup>34</sup> Now, Cézanne seems to have been a loquacious man on the subject of art, if we can believe the testimony of Joachim Gasquet, who knew him well,<sup>35</sup> and it is most probable that he discussed at some length his new manner and outlook with the man who was his oldest and best friend, his first guide and supporter in Paris. Even assuming a nearly complete artistic stupidity on Zola's part—a stupidity which is far from established—it is very difficult to think that he could have entirely misunderstood the theories and doctrines of Cézanne. It might be noted that Zola had grasped quite well the critical

32. Mack, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-98.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 316-18.

34. Rewald, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-105.

35. *Op. cit.*, *passim*.

lessons given him by Guillemet at the time of the preparation of *Mon Salon*; there is little reason to believe that if Cézanne talked to him of art during the years immediately preceding *L'Œuvre*, as he surely must have, Zola would have remained entirely uncomprehending.

To return to *L'Œuvre* itself, not only the paintings described in the novel but the artistic theories advanced there are as far as possible from Cézanne's. In *L'Œuvre*, Lantier is clearly a naturalist in philosophical outlook and, at the same time, the leader of the open-air or impressionistic school. In the *Ebauche* Zola says: "J'en fais naturellement un naturaliste. . . ."36 and indeed in the novel itself the "sacrée suite de toiles"<sup>37</sup> which Lantier hopes some day to create is nothing but a transposition into the visual arts of the basic idea of the *Rougon-Macquart* series, the depiction of all aspects of modern life in France, with emphasis on its urban and industrial phases. Nothing of course could have been further from the ideal of Cézanne, the "pure painter," as Zola undoubtedly knew; and nothing could have been more distant from the real truth about Cézanne than to make of him an impressionist, above all the originator and principal exponent of an artistic theory of which he himself never approved and which had largely a negative influence on him in the form of Pissarro's lessons.<sup>38</sup> It is, naturally, possible that Zola did class Cézanne among the impressionists, but it might be pointed out that he had not included his name among the painters discussed in *Mon Salon*, which was written specifically in defense of the impressionistic school. Nor is such a confusion on Zola's part likely, given Cézanne's often-expressed and violent dislike not only of the personalities of the men of that group but also of their technical innovations and view of the real world. It would appear, rather, that as a theorist Lantier is a combination portrait of Zola himself and of Edouard Manet; it is most improbable that Zola borrowed any of his ideas in this respect from those expressed by Cézanne.

From the evidence, then, it seems that Zola scarcely intended Lantier's artistic failure to symbolize his belief that the sober, mature Cézanne was doomed to the same fate. Lantier's artistic efforts may, at most, symbolize the struggles of the young Cézanne; they surely were not meant by Zola as a prophecy of his friend's inevitable failure.

If we accept the conclusion, as the evidence seems to indicate, that *L'Œuvre* has but little of the character of a real *roman à clé*, can any other interpretation be made of the book? Is it possible that Zola had some other goal in mind than the writing of an intensely personal novel which should depend for its success only on its scandalous appeal? His own words indicate that some broader interpretation is not only possible, but is indeed almost imperative. In the *Ebauche* of the work he makes it clear that Lantier's

36. *L'Œuvre*, p. 412 (*Ebauche*).

37. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

38. Mack, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-98.

failure is not to be attributed, in the novel, solely to his personal deficiencies, "...sa physiologie, sa race, la lésion de son œil,"<sup>39</sup> but also to the ambience of the times, "...notre fièvre de tout vouloir, ... notre déséquilibre."<sup>40</sup> In *L'Œuvre* he clearly indicates that the *Zeitgeist* was as much the cause of Lantier's failure as the artist's own imperfections. As early as the second chapter the groundwork is laid for what is apparently the novel's chief philosophical point. When Lantier cannot make his *Plein-Air* turn out exactly as he wishes he blames Delacroix's influence on his vision of the world: "Ah! nous y trempons tous, dans la sauce romantique. Notre jeunesse y a trop barboté, nous en sommes barbouillés jusqu'au menton. Il nous faudra une fameuse lessive."<sup>41</sup> A little later he is "...furieux de la gangrène romantique qui repoussait quand même en lui: c'était son mal peut-être, l'idée fausse dont il se sentait parfois la barre en travers du crâne."<sup>42</sup> As the visionary nude of the painting progresses further and further toward pure hallucination Claude is tortured more and more by the "vieux regain de romantisme"<sup>43</sup> which is his part and the part of his generation in the modern world. In the last pages of the novel Zola is careful to draw the moral of the tale (Sandoz, who often expresses some of Zola's psychological and philosophical theories, is speaking): "...Oui, notre génération a trempé jusqu'au ventre dans le romantisme, et nous en sommes restés imprégnés quand même, et nous avons eu beau nous débarbouiller, prendre des bains de réalité violente, la tache s'entête, toutes les lessives du monde n'en ôteront pas l'odeur."<sup>44</sup> Though Claude is a man of the reasonable 'sixties, he is haunted by the same "mal" which tortured the "beaux ténébreux" of thirty years before: the hopeless but unending quest for the ideal, the "bovarysme" which drove René and Rolla and their descendants into the long purgatory of disillusionment or the hell of despair. Like some of his literary forebears he cannot cease his search for the ultimate, the absolute of life and of beauty, until he finally ends in mania, madness and suicide.

If Zola intended *L'Œuvre* as an attack on the persisting romantic strain of his time and Lantier as a symbol of the hopeless pursuit of the unattainable, instead of as a portrait of Paul Cézanne, then the exploration of the novel in purely literary terms becomes much easier. When the supposed biographical elements of the novel are reduced in importance, *L'Œuvre* curiously resembles the famous short story of Balzac, *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*; it resembles it so much indeed that in a certain light it appears to be nothing more than a much expanded, violently colored and brutal

39. *L'Œuvre*, p. 410 (*Ebauche*).

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

(that is, naturalistic) reworking of Balzac's unforgettable tale.<sup>45</sup>

Needless to say, there is little doubt that Zola knew *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, for his close acquaintance with the whole of Balzac's work is attested not only by his long article on the great realist in *Les Romanciers naturalistes*, but also by a passage from his correspondence in which, in 1867, he discloses that he is reading Balzac again and with even greater admiration than before.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* was one of Cézanne's favorite books, one of the few literary works to which he kept returning all through his life. He must certainly have spoken to Zola of the little story, for its central figure had made such a deep impression on him that he was accustomed to declare: "Frenhofer, c'est moi!"<sup>47</sup>

Incidentally, this expression of Cézanne's has done much toward creating one aspect of the "Cézanne legend." Some of his biographers seized upon it as an indication that Cézanne himself felt that his artistic efforts were doomed to failure, that he thought of himself as another ill-fated toiler, condemned to dream of an unattainable art based on a perfect theory. In point of fact, however, Cézanne, when he declared that he was Frenhofer, was probably referring only to the amazingly advanced technical suggestions given by Balzac in *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, suggestions which were to find their exact reflection in his own canvasses. Indeed, the whole doctrine of color, light, form and contour presented by Frenhofer has an impressively exact realization in the body of Cézanne's work<sup>48</sup>—perhaps the most curious case of artistic parallelism offered by the entire nineteenth century. It is

45. The resemblance of the two stories was noted at the time of the appearance of *L'Œuvre* by the critic Vincent, in the *XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* for 17 April 1886 (quoted in the Notes to *L'Œuvre*, p. 428), and also by Maurice François, in *L'Autorité* for 3 May 1886 (quoted in the Notes, p. 432). Curiously, neither critic sees the evident similarity of the primary and secondary plots of the two works: Vincent sees only a similarity between the subplots and François only the likeness of the principal themes.

46. *Lettres de jeunesse*, p. 307 (letter to Valabrègue, 29 May 1867.)

47. Bernard, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

48. The following lines from *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* are cited as typical of the artistic doctrines advanced by Balzac. When read against the background of Cézanne's actual accomplishment, it will be seen with what startling accuracy they prophesy the very essence and nature of his art:

"C'est une silhouette qui n'a qu'une seule face. C'est une apparence découpée, une image qui ne saurait se retourner, ni changer de position."

"Tu as flotté indécis entre les deux systèmes, entre le dessin et la couleur, entre le flegme minutieux, la raideur précise des vieux maîtres allemands et l'ardeur éblouissante, l'heureuse abondance des peintres italiens."

"La mission de l'art n'est pas de copier la nature, mais de l'exprimer."

"Vous ne descendez pas assez dans l'intimité de la forme, vous ne la poursuivez pas avec assez d'amour et de persévérance dans ses détours et dans ses fuites."

"La forme est . . . un truchement pour se communiquer des idées, des sensations, une vaste poésie."

" . . . j'ai . . . ébauché ma figure dans un ton clair avec une pâte souple et nourrie, — car l'ombre n'est qu'un accident . . ."

" . . . je n'ai pas marqué sèchement les bords extérieurs de ma figure et fait ressortir jusqu'au moindre détail anatomique, car le corps humain ne finit pas par des lignes . . . La nature comporte une suite de rondeurs qui s'enveloppent les unes dans les autres. Rigoureusement parlant, le dessin n'existe pas."



highly unlikely that Cézanne, whose opinion of his own painting was always rather good (witness his remark in a letter of 26 September 1874 to his mother that he thinks himself "plus fort" than all those around him), should have considered himself in the same light as the magnificent failure of Balzac's work. He saw in Frenhofer, with reason, his artistic ancestor, even his mentor; he could hardly have thought that Frenhofer's life was a prophecy of his own final defeat.

Be that as it may, it is quite apparent that Zola must have known Balzac's story well, from the enthusiastic commentaries of Cézanne if not indeed from his own early reading.

The story of *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* is of course familiar. It recounts the meeting of the young Nicolas Poussin with the obscure but mighty genius, Frenhofer, sole possessor of the artistic technique perfected by his late friend, the great Mabuse. Frenhofer's talent, as exhibited in some paintings in his studio, is almost incredibly perfect, but he scoffs at his earlier works as mere sketches in comparison with his masterpiece, *La Belle-Noiseuse*, a composition on which he has been laboring ten years and which he has allowed no one to see. *La Belle-Noiseuse* is the fine flower of the technique of which he alone knows the secret, the painting without flaw, the attainment of the ideal of life on canvas. Poussin, determined to surprise the secret of the eccentric master in the great work and knowing that Frenhofer complains constantly of being unable to find the perfect female beauty to which he may compare his painting, hits upon the idea of offering him the incomparable body of his mistress, Gillette, as his model in return for the privilege of seeing the great composition. Gillette is scarcely taken by the idea, seeing in it not only an affront to her modesty but also the unmistakable proof that her lover is quite willing to sacrifice her to the needs of his art. She finally consents, but the seeds of a long rivalry with an artistic ideal are sown in her heart, in her struggle for the painter's love. Frenhofer likewise agrees, but reluctantly also, for he is fearful of committing a great wrong to his Belle-Noiseuse, whom he loves more than a mistress. In exchange, then, for a view of Gillette's magnificent beauty Frenhofer permits Poussin and his friend Porbus to see the hidden masterpiece. But when the curtain is removed from the easel they are

"La ligne est le moyen par lequel l'homme se rend compte de l'effet de la lumière sur les objets; mais il n'y a pas de lignes dans la nature, où tout est plein; c'est en modelant qu'on dessine, c'est-à-dire qu'on détache les choses du milieu où elles sont; la distribution du jour donne seule l'apparence aux corps!"

"N'est-ce pas ainsi que procède le soleil, ce divin peintre de l'univers?"

"N'est-ce pas le même phénomène que nous présentent les objets qui sont dans l'atmosphère comme les poissons dans l'eau? Admirez comme les contours se détachent du fond . . ."

"... par une suite de touches et de rehauts fortement empâtés, je suis parvenu à accrocher la véritable lumière . . ."

"... j'ai pu, à force de caresser le contour de ma figure . . . ôter jusqu'à l'idée de dessin et de moyens artificiels, et lui donner l'aspect et la rondeur mêmes de la nature."

horrified to see that nothing recognizable remains of the painting: "Je ne vois là," says Poussin, "que des couleurs confusément amassées et contenues par une multitude de lignes bizarres qui forment une muraille de peinture."<sup>49</sup> When the two friends reveal to him what he has done with his ten years of effort, Frenhofer is at first crushed, then suspicious of their motives, for in his suddenly revealed madness he thinks that they have conspired against him to deprive him of his masterpiece. But the next day he is dead, his paintings burned.

There are of course some obvious similarities of plot between *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* and *L'Œuvre*, chief among which is an artist's long endeavor to fix his vision on canvas and his death when he discovers his ultimate failure. In addition, the other main themes of *L'Œuvre*—the painter's love for the figure he is never quite able to finish, and the struggle for his affections between the woman of flesh and blood and the nude beauty of the picture—are sketched in Balzac's story. There are also certain other significant similarities of detail between the two works which may be considerably more than coincidences.

The pursuit of the absolute is quite evidently the theme of both works, the typically romantic quest for the "distant princess" of art. In both stories it takes the same form: the endless search for perfection in an individual work, which becomes eventually not only the painter's great love but also the symbol of his impotence and imperfection, the difficulty which he cannot conquer even with a lifetime of effort. Frenhofer spends ten years in his futile chase, Lantier even more; and in each case the search for perfection takes the same form of constant retouches and changes of detail which indicate an ineradicable inner suspicion of eventual failure, a still small voice of doubt. For while both Frenhofer and Lantier are geniuses and proclaim their mastery with a certain assurance, they are nevertheless doubters, distrustful of the very genius which they themselves know to be imperfect. "Tenez," Frenhofer cries, "le trop de science, de même que l'ignorance, arrive à une négation. Je doute de mon oeuvre!"<sup>50</sup> Porbus says of him that "... à force de recherches, il est arrivé à douter de l'objet même de ses recherches."<sup>51</sup> Claude also suffers from a peculiarly bitter kind of doubt that makes him sometimes execrate painting as a lover would execrate the mistress who betrays him. And he doubts for the same reason as Frenhofer: having concentrated all his efforts for too long a time on the minutiae of a single composition, he arrives little by little at an unconfessed belief in his own impotence, which in the long run ruins not only his painting but his very life. In his ceaseless efforts toward perfection Lantier is undoubtedly symbolic of an artistic tendency of which Zola himself dis-

49. Balzac: *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, in *Études philosophiques*, II, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bouteron and Longnon, Paris, Conard, 1925, p. 31.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 20.



approved, the inability to let a work of art stand by itself once it has been brought to a state of relative completeness. In an early letter to Cézanne he had expressed the view that such unending effort was not only useless but even extremely harmful and it may well be that the whole germ of *L'Œuvre* is contained in these words of his in 1860:

Je dis également comme toi, que l'artiste ne doit pas remanier son œuvre. Je m'explique: que le poète, en relisant son œuvre entière, retranche un vers par-ci, par-là, qu'il change la forme sans changer l'idée, je n'y vois pas de mal, je crois même que c'est une nécessité. Mais qu'après coup, des semaines, des mois, des années écoulées, il bouleverse son œuvre, abattant ici, reconstruisant plus loin, c'est selon moi une sottise et du temps perdu. Outre qu'il détruit un monument, portant en quelque sorte le cachet de son époque, il ne fait jamais d'une pièce médiocre mais originale, qu'une pièce tiraillée, froide. Que n'emploie-t-il plutôt ces longues heures d'une stérile correction à composer un nouveau poème, où son expérience acquise fera merveille. Pour ma part, j'ai toujours aimé mieux écrire vingt vers que d'en corriger deux; c'est un travail des plus ingrats et que je soupçonne fort d'être contraire au développement de l'intelligence. D'ailleurs, où en serions-nous s'il fallait toujours corriger les défauts que le temps nous montre dans nos œuvres? chaque édition différerait de la précédente; ce serait une Babel inextricable et la pensée passerait par tant de formes qu'elle changerait du blanc au noir. Ainsi donc, je suis complètement de ton avis: travaillez avec conscience, faites le mieux que vous pourrez, donnez quelques coups de lime, pour mieux ajuster les parties et présenter un tout convenable, puis abandonnez votre œuvre à sa bonne ou à sa mauvaise fortune, ayant soin de mettre au bas la date de sa composition. Il sera toujours plus sage de laisser mauvais ce qui est mauvais et de tâcher de faire meilleur sur un autre sujet.— Comme toi, je parle ici pour l'artiste en général: poète, peintre, sculpteur, musicien.<sup>52</sup>

Zola's own manuscripts, with the lack of the effort apparent in, for example, Flaubert's, testify that all through his life he was faithful to the precepts he laid down in this letter. Lantier may have been intended only as a horrible example of the consequences of a too long and concentrated artistic effort. It is significant that Cézanne, at least in 1860, seems to have had the same views, for if such was in truth his opinion—and his work indicates that while he would often spend a long time on one painting, he was far from being obsessed with the desire for absolute perfection and indeed would often abandon a nearly complete work for another—he can scarcely be identified with the Lantier of the novel, at least in this detail.

With both Lantier and Frenhofer the slow, disintegrating process of re-touching and change leads to the nearly complete destruction of the original genial conception—nearly complete because in both *La Belle-Noiseuse* and in Lantier's unfinished composition one significant detail escapes, to bear witness to the creator's original power of concept and execution. In Frenhofer's painting only a foot remains of the gorgeous beauty of the courtesan,

52. *Lettres de jeunesse*, p. 150.

"...mais un pied délicieux, un pied vivant! Ils restèrent pétrifiés d'admiration devant ce fragment échappé à une incroyable, à une lente et progressive destruction. Ce pied apparaissait là comme un torse de quelque Vénus en marbre de Paros qui surgirait parmi les décombres d'une ville incendiée."<sup>53</sup> In Claude's painting, even when the great visionary nude has come to dominate it completely, there remains "...un groupe excellent, les débardeurs qui déchargeaient les sacs de plâtre, des morceaux très travaillés ceux-là, d'une belle puissance de facture."<sup>54</sup> Such are the only monuments they leave of their departed genius, these modern sons of Pygmalion.

Both Balzac and Zola, the former expressly, the latter by clear implication, reveal the cause of this ceaseless doubt, with its reworking and changing, on the part of their painters: both spend too much time in reasoning, in contemplating the vision of their inner eye, not enough in the actual practice of their art. Balzac has Porbus affirm that "...la pratique et l'observation sont tout chez un peintre, et... si le raisonnement et la poésie se querellent avec les brosses, on arrive au doute comme le bonhomme..."<sup>55</sup> When Lantier has prepared every detail for the execution of his great work he is suddenly seized with misgivings: has he selected the best view of the scene, the best light? "Il retourna au pont des Saints-Pères, il y vécut trois mois encore."<sup>56</sup> The entire history of his final work is to be the same, spells of furious and futile labor broken at the point he has chosen by long periods of contemplation, during which he is drawn from his easel as if by an obsession. The words of Porbus, had he had such a counselor, might have saved him: "Travaillez! les peintres ne doivent méditer que les brosses à la main."<sup>57</sup> Here again, if indeed Zola did not invent the detail himself, he would seem to have borrowed it rather from Balzac than from the life of Cézanne. The latter's whole career was an example of the long, stubborn effort at the "motif," that is, of meditation before the object itself, "les brosses à la main"; for his effort was not the effort to philosophize, to poeticize, but only to *see*, to see and transpose immediately, careful always not to corrupt the vision of his physical eye with the metaphysics of the inner view.

It might further be noted that this contemplative tendency on the part of both painters, as described by Zola and Balzac, is singularly favored by their respective financial situations; Frenhofer, of course, is immensely wealthy and can meditate and reason all he wishes, with no regard for financial reward or glory; Claude is far from rich, but throughout most of *L'Œuvre* he is shown as possessing sufficient capital to permit him to live without producing for profit. Thus each of them was deprived of what un-

53. *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, p. 51.

54. *L'Œuvre*, p. 281.

55. *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, p. 21.

56. *L'Œuvre*, p. 252.

57. *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, p. 21.

doubtedly, was for their authors, a normal and healthy circumstance of the creator's life, the necessity of living by his talents. He thus became the victim of the perfectionist's special torture, the inability to accept anything less than an impossible ideal. It has sometimes been claimed that the fact that Lantier has sufficient income to keep him from painting for money is a reflection of the same situation on the part of Cézanne, who was more than moderately well-to-do; but it is evident that Zola had no need to resort to the intimate details of his friend's life for this significant aspect of his novel—he may well have found it ready at hand in Balzac.

Again, it might be pointed out that both paintings, as described in *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* and *L'Œuvre*, are executed essentially without model, following only the data of the artist's inner vision. Frenhofer has never been able to find the perfect female form to correspond to his personal ideal: he is on the point of visiting Turkey, Greece and Asia to compare his work with different kinds of beauty in his search for the "introuvable Vénus des anciens."<sup>58</sup> Nor does Claude's conception of his work allow him to find the model he would like; he tries one or two from among his old acquaintances, then forces his wife to pose for him, but he is never truly satisfied with what his eyes reveal to him and finally comes to paint directly from the vision, not from reality. Like Frenhofer—but very much unlike Cézanne who in his mature years never set brush to canvas without some model, even though it might be nothing but a page from the *Magasin pittoresque*—"... il cherchait sans document, en dehors de la nature."<sup>59</sup> The combination of too much reasoning, too much poeticizing, and the lack of real and living nature to correct the visionary tendency brings them both, in spite of their undenied genius, to total artistic failure.<sup>60</sup>

In both stories there is a clear echo of the Pygmalion legend. To Frenhofer, La Belle-Noiseuse is his "épouse"; he has lived with her for ten years, she is his, his alone, she loves him. "Ne m'a-t-elle pas souri à chaque coup de pinceau que je lui ai donné? elle a une âme, l'âme dont je l'ai douée. Elle rougirait si d'autres yeux que les miens s'arrêtaient sur elle..."<sup>61</sup> Claude likewise sinks so far into his adoration for the fantastic

58. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

59. *L'Œuvre*, p. 98.

60. There is a curious similarity of detail, if not of tone, between a brief scene of *L'Œuvre* and one from *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*; in Balzac's story the young Poussin, urged on by Porbus, presents Gillette to Frenhofer, warning him meanwhile that he will kill him if Gillette complains of his conduct during her pose. Gillette, *honnête* to the end, reflects: "Pour lui... ne suis-je donc pas plus qu'une femme?" (p. 29). In *L'Œuvre*, the setting is the same, but the treatment radically different. Jory, the journalist, brings home Irma Bécot, a well-known model and light lady, to see Claude; at her suggestion that she may be useful to the painter, Jory becomes enthusiastic: "Tiens, mais c'est une idée! Toi qui cherches une belle fille, sans la trouver! Elle va se défaire. Défaïs-toi, ma chérie, défais-toi un peu, pour qu'il voie." D'une main, Irma dénoua vivement son chapeau, et elle cherchait de l'autre les agrafes de son corsage, malgré les refus énergiques de Claude" (p. 114).

61. *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, pp. 25-26.

nude of his painting that his wife Christine can justly reproach him that:

. . . ce sont tes maîtresses, toutes ces femmes peintes. Avant d'être la tienne, je m'en étais aperçue déjà, il n'y avait qu'à voir de quelle main tu caressais leur nudité, de quels yeux tu les contemplais ensuite. Hein? était-ce malsain et stupide, un pareil désir chez un garçon? brûler pour des images, serrer dans ses bras le vide d'une illusion! et tu en avais conscience, tu t'en cachais comme d'une chose inavouable. . . .<sup>62</sup>

Here one might insist on the efforts of both mad geniuses to "faire vivant." Frenhofer never ceases to speak of the life-like effect of his Belle-Noiseuse; her flesh is so alive, so warm, he claims, that one can see her move and breathe. To him she is no mere figure on canvas, she is Catherine Lescault herself, La Belle-Noiseuse, mistress of kings, stretched voluptuously on her magnificent couch awaiting the visit of her royal lover. Claude too is obsessed with the desire to create a "real" woman on canvas, a figure who should be not only a symbol of feminine seduction and sexual allurements, but a true, recognizable woman who might return his great and yearning love. Both painters, incidentally, have the obsession of female flesh; they constantly speak of rendering the effects of light on human skin and indeed they are driven to mania by their attempt to create the impression of moving, pulsing blood below the satiny surface of their mystic women. There is no need to stress the erotic nature of both paintings; La Belle-Noiseuse, as much as the bejeweled nude that Claude finally conceives, is a symbol of unsated lust, of a sexual drive that is not much less than an obsession. Again Zola's idea, if it had an origin outside his own mind, would seem to come from Balzac rather than from the life of Cézanne, of whom it is not recorded that he was interested, at least as a mature artist, in the more openly erotic aspects of art.

In *L'Œuvre*, the love of the painter for his creation provides the only truly dramatic aspect of the novel. Not that Claude's devotion to his fantastic woman is in itself dramatic, but as the cause of his abandonment of his wife and child it takes on the appearance of a really tragic passion. For Christine, his wife, is condemned by his neglect to be the rival of the vision he has conjured up, the rival for the love of the man to whom she has sacrificed her entire life, happiness and even her child. At the beginning of her liaison with Claude, she seems to be completely victorious over her lover's visionary women; she wins him so completely in fact that during their long stay at Bennecourt he almost entirely abandons his work. But with their return to Paris he comes back little by little to his old passion until, by the end of the book, he has ceased to regard Christine as anything but an unpaid model, to be done with as he pleases. Her long defeat as woman and lover becomes increasingly galling to Christine until, in the final pages of the novel, she reveals to Claude in a violent scene of reproach how she has suffered at thus being conquered by the woman of oil and

62. *L'Œuvre*, p. 378.

canvas. This long fight, ending in the defeat of the real and ardent woman of flesh and blood by the mystic nude of the Seine, is in fact the only episode of *L'Œuvre* which transcends the purely intellectual problem and gives the work a human interest. In *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* the situation is considerably different, but it is not at all impossible, none the less, that Zola took his idea for the rivalry from Balzac's tale. In the latter, Frenhofer is a bachelor, devoted only to his painting and scorning women as unworthy to divert his attention from La Belle-Noiseuse. But the relationships between Poussin and Gillette and between Lantier and Christine bear a certain resemblance. In Balzac's story Poussin rather shamefacedly makes his request to Gillette that she pose for Frenhofer in order that the old painter may allow him to see the great, hidden work. Gillette, one of those respectable young ladies of the street that the minor realists were to make so popular, rebels at this caprice. Ashamed of his boldness, Poussin quickly withdraws his request: "Pardonne, ma Gillette. . . J'aime mieux être aimé que glorieux. Pour moi, tu es plus belle que la fortune et les honneurs. Va, jette mes pinceaux, brûle ces esquisses. Je me suis trompé. Ma vocation, c'est de t'aimer. Je ne suis pas peintre, je suis amoureux. Périront l'art et tous ses secrets!"<sup>63</sup> His temporary renunciation of art at the behest of his mistress has what seems to be a curious echo in the last pages of *L'Œuvre*, when Christine has dragged Claude from his painting almost by main force. In her fierce love for him she forces him to abjure his devotion to his art:

"Dis que la peinture est imbécile.—La peinture est imbécile.—Dis que tu ne travailleras plus, que tu t'en moques, que tu brûleras tes tableaux, pour me faire plaisir.—Je brûlerai mes tableaux, je ne travaillerai plus.—Et dis qu'il n'y a que moi, que de me tenir là, comme tu me tiens, est le bonheur unique, que tu craches sur l'autre, cette gueuse que tu as peinte. Crache, crache donc, que je t'entende!—Tiens! je crache, il n'y a que toi."<sup>64</sup>

In *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, Gillette feels instinctively, when Poussin renounces his gods for her love, that ". . . les arts étaient oubliés pour elle, et jetés à ses pieds comme un grain d'encens."<sup>65</sup> But he cuts so pitiable a figure at her refusal that she decides to please him, cost what it may. However, as soon as she sees the look of joy on his face when she consents, she knows that she has lost him forever. A little later, when she sees him contemplating one of Frenhofer's portraits, she reflects bitterly: "Il ne m'a jamais regardée ainsi."<sup>66</sup> At the very close of the story, having been completely forgotten by Poussin and Porbus in the studio of Frenhofer, she calls herself forcibly to their attention, crying to her lover: "Tue-moi . . . je serais une infâme de t'aimer encore, car je te méprise. Je t'admire et tu

63. *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, p. 23.

64. *L'Œuvre*, p. 383.

65. *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, p. 23.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

me fais horreur. Je t'aime et je crois que je te hais déjà."<sup>67</sup> Her experiences are exactly the same as Christine's: at first victorious over art, she succumbs at length to pity for her struggling artist and gradually loses all hold on him as he sinks more deeply into his intellectual love for his own creations. Zola certainly did not borrow the idea for this struggle of woman and art from the life of Cézanne, for there is no record that Hortense Fiquet ever concerned herself enough with Cézanne's painting to become jealous of it; but he may well have taken it from its brief but effective treatment in Balzac. If he did borrow it from Balzac he changed the situation appreciably to heighten its dramatic effect, but seems to have left the essential conception intact. In any case, this much is certain: in both *L'Œuvre* and *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* the rivalry between the real woman of flesh and blood and her antagonist of the painting is the most important of the minor themes, important enough to provide what is almost a second complete plot of psychological interest to supplement the more purely philosophical idea of both stories.

In one or two other details there is some similarity. We might note, first, that both painters are maniacs of exactly the same type, apparently quite well-balanced and normal in most of the aspects of everyday life and displaying their obsession only in matters concerning their art. Frenhofer has a reputation as an eccentric, it is true, but he does little to justify it until the last pages of *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*. Claude is likewise fairly normal in his general activities and, though suffering from fits of melancholy and discouragement, gives little hint of his ultimate psychological crash until very near the end of *L'Œuvre*. The deaths of the two painters, too, are scarcely prepared for; in Balzac's story Frenhofer is simply found dead the next morning after discovering his long error, in Zola's, Lantier hangs himself apparently on impulse after hearing Christine's bitter words about his work; in neither case is any early hint given of the denouement of the painter's struggles. It would seem that Zola has here taken a page from Balzac's technical book, for by the sudden introduction of death on the scene he quite obviously intended to conclude his composition with something of a shock, as striking in its unexpectedness as that of *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*. This similarity of compositional technique on the part of Balzac and Zola brings into sharp relief, however, the very significant differences of treatment they accord the revelation of their heroes' insanity and death. With Zola the scene of suicide is violent, brutal, nightmarish; with Balzac it is a one-sentence masterpiece of understatement, no more. The two little passages offer something like a microcosmic view of the fundamental differences that separate French naturalism from realism and present in striking form an excellent argument against those who would see in Zola's literature nothing but a continuation, less the talent, of the novels of Balzac.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 34.



The denouements of both stories are brought about in a generally similar way, that is, by means of a second person who intervenes to reveal to the artist that he has ruined his work. In Balzac it is Poussin's almost involuntary cry, "Mais, tôt ou tard, il s'apercevra qu'il n'y a rien sur sa toile,"<sup>68</sup> a cry that Frenhofer overhears and which discloses to him the enormity of his artistic error. In Zola the conclusion is brought about, once more, in a much more violent and explicit way: on finding Claude frenziedly at work on the vision that torments him, Christine is at last moved to protest, in agony at his long abandonment of her love: "Mais regarde donc! mais dis-toi où tu en es! C'est hideux, c'est lamentable et grotesque, il faut que tu t'en aperçoives à la fin! Hein? est-ce laid, est-ce imbécile? Tu vois bien que tu es vaincu, pourquoi t'obstiner encore? Ça n'a pas de bon sens, voilà ce qui me révolte. Si tu ne peux être un grand peintre, la vie nous reste, ah! la vie, la vie. . . ."<sup>69</sup> Again it would seem that Balzac's technical example was decisive for Zola; appreciating the dramatic effect of the revelation made by Poussin in *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, he may well have decided to employ some similar stratagem to unwind his plot. But once again, there are striking and important differences of execution, of artistic eye, that mark the work of master and disciple.

The last noteworthy similarity of detail in the two works is in the philosophical conclusion that each novelist draws, by means of his *porte-parole*, from the painter's failure. "Là," says Porbus on seeing what remains of La Belle-Noiseuse, "Là finit notre art sur terre." "Et de là," Poussin replies, "il va se perdre dans les cieux."<sup>70</sup> Balzac's idea, it would seem, is that all art contains within itself the seeds of its own ruin, that when the effort toward perfection and the absolute is pushed too far it must end as Frenhofer's ended, in agony and failure; and that such an ending is not only inevitable but logical, given our human limitations. Sandoz, Zola's voice in *L'Œuvre*, speaks at the close of the novel to Bongrand, the painter, and says: "Oui, il faut vraiment manquer de fierté, se résigner à l'à peu près et tricher avec la vie. . . . Moi qui pousse mes bouquins jusqu'au bout, je me méprise de les sentir incomplets et mensongers, malgré mon effort." And he continues as they walk among the tombs of the cemetery where Claude lies: "Au moins, en voilà un qui a été logique et brave. . . . Il a avoué son impuissance et il s'est tué. . . . Puisque nous ne pouvons rien créer, puisque nous ne sommes que des reproducteurs débiles, autant vaudrait-il nous casser la tête tout de suite."<sup>71</sup>

Claude, then, looks much like Frenhofer, looks like him in many of the aspects of his psychological life and in some of the details of his physical existence; he resembles him almost exactly in the manner and degree to

68. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

69. *L'Œuvre*, p. 377.

70. *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu*, p. 33.

71. *L'Œuvre*, pp. 396-97.

which he has absorbed the poison of the romantic ideal. He is his blood-brother as a symbol of imperfect humanity in its struggle with the Angel of Art. Lantier is thus probably not Cézanne at all and indeed, if there are any true similarities between Zola's mad painter and his old friend of Aix, they are likely only similarities of detail, not fundamental to the development of the story. At all events, Cézanne's role in the novel is undoubtedly much smaller than is sometimes believed even today, for Zola's tragic conception seems to stem, on the whole, much more from his literary predecessor than from his own stock of memories and impressions. *L'Œuvre*, then, is much less of a *roman à clé* than a naturalistic reworking of a theme selected from the vast arsenal of the *Comédie humaine*. But even if one accepts this filiation of *L'Œuvre* and *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* one cannot but be struck by the great differences of execution that mark the two works. There can be no finer testimony to Zola's bold and healthy originality than the very scenes of the novel where he has, to all appearances, taken the *données* of his great master and made them his own. His critics have made much of the word "nature" in his famous definition of art; they have sometimes forgotten that he himself stressed equally the "tempérament" that changes and refines "nature." *L'Œuvre* is here to attest its importance.

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## GUY DE MAUPASSANT AND HIS BROTHER HERVÉ

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MAUPASSANT's first biographer, whose work of more than forty years ago remains the standard biography to this day, concludes as follows after several references to Guy's brother Hervé up to the time Guy himself was thirteen years old: "Hervé ne tint pas une grande place dans son existence, et nous n'aurons guère à parler de lui dans la suite de cette étude."<sup>1</sup> Subsequent biographers have been content to let the matter rest there, unsuspecting the violent drama that had marked the relations between the brothers for several years.

A fragment of a letter from Flaubert to his devoted disciple Guy, published for the first time in 1927 in an inconspicuous footnote, gave an inkling of those strained relations between Hervé on one side and his mother and elder brother on the other:

Il me tarde d'avoir des détails sur les *frasques*<sup>2</sup> de votre frère et je plains votre pauvre maman et vous aussi des embêtements que ce jeune homme vous cause.<sup>3</sup>

A hitherto unpublished letter of Maupassant,<sup>4</sup> reproduced at the end of this article, will shed light on the trials that Hervé made his brother endure. It proves that Hervé's doings were far from the usual "*frasques de jeunesse*," as the biographer who originally published the Flaubert note would have it.<sup>5</sup>

Hervé de Maupassant, son of Gustave and Laure de Maupassant, was Guy's junior by six years. He was born on May 19, 1856, and grew up with his brother in the attractive Normandy coast village of Etretat, where the Maupassants had a villa, "Les Verguies." There, under the indulgent eye of their mother, the two boys spent a carefree childhood, learning their three R's from Mme de Maupassant and the abbé Aubourg. When, at the age of thirteen, Guy seemed to have absorbed all the learning that the

1. Edouard Maynial, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Guy de Maupassant*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1906, p. 38.

2. The italics are Flaubert's.

3. Georges Normandy, *La Fin de Maupassant*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1927, p. 104. The letter, dated August 28, 1878, appears in full in Gustave Flaubert, *Lettres à Maupassant*, commentées par Georges Normandy, Paris, Editions du Livre Moderne, 1942, pp. 97-98.

4. One of a group of Maupassant letters originally in the collection of the famous bibliophile Jules Le Petit. These letters constituted lot 2143 in the Le Petit sale of 1918, described as follows in the sale catalogue:

"Correspondance de Guy de Maupassant avec M. et Mme Louis Le Poittevin, réunion de trente-trois lettres et billets autographes signés de Guy de Maupassant."

"Correspondance amicale renfermant de nombreux renseignements intéressants sur Guy de Maupassant, sur son frère, la succession de son père et de sa mère, ses divers déplacements à Etretat, dans le Midi de la France et en Italie."

"On y a joint une intéressante lettre de Louis Le Poittevin à Maupassant."

These letters were later acquired by the well-known Paris dealer, Pierre Berès, from whom they were subsequently acquired by the present writer.

5. Georges Normandy, *La Fin de Maupassant*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1927, p. 103.

good abbé could give him, he was sent to a nearby church school for the more formal training which was to lead to the *baccalauréat*. What happened thereafter to Hervé is unknown. Presumably he also continued under the abbé's tutelage for some years before being sent away to school. At any rate, no documentary evidence is available concerning the details of his life from 1863 to the day he came of age in 1877. In that year he was a non-commissioned cavalry officer in Brittany.<sup>6</sup>

Flaubert's letter to Guy, written the following year, gives a first hint that Hervé's behavior had become such as to cause his family serious alarm. Fully a year later his conduct apparently had not improved, judging by the following lines written to Mme de Maupassant by her elder son:

Here is a letter which I have received from Hervé. I wrote him as harsh and humiliating a letter as possible. He replied very humbly, so I sent him a severe letter, but in a less highly-strung vein. You must see if you can get the colonel to promise to have him transferred to another corps.<sup>7</sup>

The frantic mother must have succeeded in effecting the transfer, for the following year, 1880, we find Hervé, still in uniform, living with his father in Paris, at 37, rue Pigalle.<sup>8</sup> Then comes the testimony of the key letter published below, written by Maupassant to Lucie Le Poittevin, wife of his cousin Louis Le Poittevin. According to this letter, written in October, 1880, when Guy was in Corsica with his mother, Hervé's service in the army had come to an end, he had refused to enlist, and was leading the life of a profligate son.

Guy nevertheless makes every effort to induce his errant brother to lead a more honorable existence. Since Hervé cannot be persuaded to reenlist in the army, an attempt is made to secure for him an appointment for service in Panama, in the ill-fated French project to cut a canal across the isthmus. Guy's efforts in behalf of his brother are revealed in another previously unpublished document in our collection—a note written on a calling card bearing Maupassant's name and Paris address (17, rue Clauzel):

Mon cher ami,

Pardon de ma longue absence. Je vous adresse mon frère qui voudrait bien obtenir un emploi à Panama. Vous seriez bien aimable de lui donner des conseils, des renseignements et, si vous le pouvez, quelque appui, car vous devez avoir des camarades qui accompagnent M. de Lesseps.

Présentez, je vous prie, tous mes compliments à Madame Pouchet et croyez à ma vive affection.

Guy de Maupassant<sup>9</sup>

6. Maynial, *op. cit.*, p. 38, note 2.

7. Ernest Boyd, "New Letters of Maupassant," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, April, 1932, p. 216. As far as we know, the original French letters published by Boyd have not yet appeared in print. The one cited here was sent from Paris, on August 14, 1879.

8. P. Dufay, "Une Correspondance de Maupassant," *Mercure de France*, CCLXXIV (1938), 718.

9. The note is accompanied by the original envelope bearing the following address: Monsieur James Pouchet, 22 ou 21 boulevard Richard Lenoir, Paris.

We do not know whether the *démarches* were successful. The next bit of available evidence, also published for the first time, is another calling card, addressed to his cousin Louis Le Poittevin:

Mon cher Louis,

Je vais voir Bardoux<sup>10</sup> pour qu'il pistonne Hervé près de M. Germain,<sup>11</sup> Député, directeur du Crédit Lyonnais.

Pourrais-tu demander à M. Cordier<sup>12</sup> une semblable recommandation.

Tout à toi,

Guy

Je compte sur ta femme et sur toi pour déjeuner chez moi *mercredi* prochain à 11 h.  $\frac{1}{2}$ .<sup>13</sup>

No further documents are available on Hervé's life in the few years before his death in 1889 at the age of thirty-three. We do know that cordial family relations must have been restored by 1884, for beginning that year<sup>14</sup> several of Guy's letters to his mother contain affectionate greetings to his younger brother.<sup>15</sup> That same year he wrote to an unidentified correspondent: "Ma mère est en ce moment à Saint Martin Laurosque et mon frère toujours auprès d'elle."<sup>16</sup>

With his brother's assistance, Hervé established himself as a horticulturist in Antibes. According to his father's declarations,<sup>17</sup> the titular head of the Maupassant family was opposed to this enterprise because he was convinced that Hervé was a poor businessman, and he attempted as stubbornly to prevent his son's marriage to a dowerless girl.<sup>18</sup> But with Guy's blessing and financial support, Hervé nevertheless embarked on the enterprise which was to culminate disastrously. The father stated later: "Je le savais incapable comme commerçant et j'ai prédit toutes les catastrophes qui se sont ensuivies!"<sup>19</sup>

A long letter by Guy to his mother, written in September, 1887, reveals

10. Agénor Bardoux, a friend of Flaubert's, Minister of Education between December 14, 1877 and February 4, 1879, had been influential in the transfer of Maupassant from the Navy department to that of Education.

11. Antoine-Henri-Marie Germain was subsequently elected to the "Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques" (1885).

12. Alphonse Cordier was a "sénateur inamovible," a friend of Flaubert's.

13. Maupassant's address is given as 83, rue Dulong. The envelope, addressed to "Monsieur Louis Le Poittevin, 10, rue Montchanin, Paris," bears a postmark with a May 17, 1883 date.

14. Cf. *Chroniques, études, correspondance de Guy de Maupassant*, Paris, Librairie Gründ, 1938, p. 325.

15. Curiously enough, in all the published correspondence of Maupassant there is not a single letter addressed either to his brother or to his father. Guy was extremely attached to his mother, but, as his father himself expressed it: "Hélas! mon pauvre Guy n'avait pas la bosse de la famille!" (Albert Lumbroso, *Souvenirs sur Maupassant*, Rome, Bocca Frères, 1905, p. 466).

16. Fragment of an unpublished letter in our collection.

17. Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

the elder brother's preoccupation with the horticultural enterprise in Antibes:

A 700 francs ce n'est vraiment pas cher. Je crois qu'Hervé aura beaucoup de clients dans le monde de Cannes cet hiver. Aussi je vais tâcher de lui faire expédier les meubles le plus tôt possible. Mais on ira tard là-bas. Mme de Sagan chez qui j'ai déjeuné hier et ses amis n'iront pas avant le 15 janvier.<sup>20</sup>

Somewhat farther in the same letter there is a warning of the financial crisis which was feared because of strained Franco-German relations:

A ce propos j'ai appris que le C. . . L. . . [Crédit Lyonnais] ne serait pas très sûr en cas de crise violente. Il faut donc qu'Hervé paye le plus possible avec les chèques. Les deux meilleures institutions de crédit sont le Crédit Foncier et le Crédit Industriel.<sup>21</sup>

In January of the following year (1888), Guy was summoned to Antibes:

. . . appelé près de mon frère très gravement malade . . . Mon frère a eu une fièvre pernicieuse avec accident aux méninges, accident qui persiste et qui nous inquiète beaucoup.<sup>22</sup>

Hervé's condition becoming steadily worse, he was placed in an asylum at Bron, a suburb of Lyon. In October 1889, Guy reported as follows to Lucie Le Poittevin:

J'ai trouvé Hervé absolument fou, sans une lueur de raison et ne nous laissant guère un espoir de guérison, ce que ma mère ignore. Les deux heures que j'ai passées avec lui à l'asile de Bron ont été terribles, car il m'a fort bien reconnu, il a pleuré, il m'a embrassé cent fois, et il voulait partir, tout en divaguant. Ma mère de son côté ne peut plus marcher et ne parle plus guère; vous voyez que tout cela ne va pas.<sup>23</sup>

The same year Maupassant had written these prophetic words to his good friend, Countess Potocka:

Si mon frère meurt avant ma mère, je crois que je deviendrai fou moi-même en songeant à la souffrance de cet être. Ah! la pauvre femme, a-t-elle été écrasée, broyée et martyrisée sans répit depuis son mariage!<sup>24</sup>

Hervé's death on November 13, 1889,<sup>25</sup> was indeed a supreme blow to his elder brother, whose own mind began to disintegrate thereafter. On January 7, 1892, after two unsuccessful attempts at suicide a few days earlier, he was placed in Dr. Blanche's famous "maison de santé" in Passy. He was to leave it only upon his death eighteen months later.

20. Cf. work in note 14, p. 347.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, p. 356, letter to Léon Fontaine.

23. From an unpublished letter in our collection.

24. Cf. work in note 14, p. 367.

25. Hervé had one child, Simone de Maupassant, who later became Mme Jean Ossola, and who was still living in the summer of 1947. The Jean Ossolas were childless.

## GUY DE MAUPASSANT'S LETTER TO LUCIE LE POITTEVIN

Ajaccio, ce vendredi [October, 1880]<sup>26</sup>

Je suis bien en retard, ma chère Cousine, et il y a longtemps que j'aurais dû vous écrire pour vous remercier de votre aimable hospitalité. Mais depuis mon départ d'Etretat j'ai vécu d'une façon si décousue que je n'ai point trouvé le temps d'écrire un billet de dix lignes.

Je suis en Corse depuis bientôt un mois, et je pars dans huit jours, rappelé par dépêche pour lancer *notre* journal "La Comédie Humaine" qui est enfin fondé.<sup>27</sup> Ma mère me paraît désolée de me voir partir, d'autant plus qu'elle a en ce moment une vraie douleur morale qui a de nouveau ébranlé complètement sa santé. Hervé s'est conduit vis-à-vis d'elle comme un misérable, en exigeant de l'argent par dépêche télégraphique pour payer ses dettes, puis refusant de se réengager, faisant de nouvelles dettes à Paris et posant des conditions. C'est un saligaud et un gredin. Je lui ai envoyé 300 francs dont il ne m'a ni remercié ni accusé réception. Si je vous dis toutes ces choses, c'est que ma mère l'envoie à Etretat où elle le nourrira pendant 3 mois, après quoi elle lui coupera complètement les vivres s'il n'a pas trouvé à se caser quelque part. Elle vous prie instamment de tenir Hervé à l'écart et surtout de ne pas lui prêter d'argent car il n'a plus qu'une idée, en emprunter à tout le monde. J'ai grand'peur que cette dernière secousse ne soit fatale à ma mère et qu'elle ne s'en relèvera jamais.<sup>28</sup> Elle serait guérie maintenant sans la conduite stupide et odieuse qu'Hervé mène depuis deux ans. Mais en voilà assez avec ce polisson.

Je serais bien reconnaissant à Louis de passer chez le nommé Fournier et de lui dire qu'il m'a volé. J'aurai soin, quand je parlerai d'Etretat dans une chronique, de recommander spécialement la maison de ce citoyen du derrière.

26. This letter must have been written in October, 1880. Cf. letter from Corsica written to Léon Hennique in September of the same year (in work quoted in note 14, p. 291), the only Maupassant letter written during the Corsican trip that has been previously published. It tells us that Maupassant had gone to Corsica to spend some time with his mother, who had been obliged to leave France for reasons of health. Guy wrote his friend that he would, though reluctantly, return to France to participate in the launching of the projected new publication, "La Comédie Humaine." He also promised Hennique a *nouvelle*, "à peu près longue comme *Boule de Suif*," which he was at the time completing. The story was probably none other than *La Maison Tellier*, which was actually to appear for the first time in the volume bearing the same title.

27. Cf. René Dumesnil, *La Publication des Soirées de Médan*, Paris, Malfère, 1933, p. 109. The projected periodical did not materialize, however. An unsigned note ("Huysmans fondateur de journal," *Mercure de France*, 1<sup>er</sup> décembre, 1919) contributes the following details regarding the proposed publication:

"A ce catalogue (un catalogue d'autographes) figure une lettre signée d'Huysmans adressée, le 1<sup>er</sup> octobre 1880, à M. Montrosier, directeur du Musée des Deux Mondes. Il lui demande sa collaboration pour un journal qu'il fonde avec la collaboration de Zola, Goncourt, Maupassant, Alexis, Céard, Hennique, etc."

"Qu'eût été le journal que voulait fonder Huysmans? Une feuille de littérature et d'art, sans aucune tendance politique. 'La politique, dit-il dans sa lettre à Montrosier, c'est le nihilisme d'herzen agrémenté d'un joli scepticisme.'"

"... Quelques difficultés avec l'imprimeur, établis dans un quartier que Joris-Karl ne pouvait souffrir (rue d'Argout, près de la rue Montmartre), suffirent à faire abandonner le projet de journal."

28. Laure de Maupassant died in 1903, in her eighty-third year.

Voilà comment j'ai été pris. En achetant mon horloge, je ne me suis pas fait montrer le cadran de près, bien entendu. Or les ornements du haut et du bas sont seuls du Louis XIV, et appliqués sur un cadran Louis XVI. De plus, le mouvement (où manque toute la sonnerie) est Louis XIII, de sorte que, les horloges Louis XIII n'ayant qu'une aiguille pour indiquer les heures et les cadrans Louis XVI portant *les minutes*, c'est tout à fait ridicule. Je n'ai pas d'aiguille à minutes sur un cadran où elles sont marquées—voilà. J'ai porté cette salade d'horlogerie chez l'homme le plus connu de Paris pour réparer ces sortes de choses et il a ri de tout son cœur.

Je viens de prendre un arrangement avec ma mère qui me cède en toute propriété le potager du grand val. Je vais donc y faire édifier un monument<sup>29</sup> suffisant pour m'y loger, y faire la cuisine et même y mettre un lit où couchera Joseph. (En entendra-t-elle?) Je suis, par conséquent, propriétaire à Etretat, et à Sartrouville! !!!<sup>31</sup>

Mon arrivée à Ajaccio a été un triomphe. Tous les journaux de la ville ont annoncé ma venue en termes magnifiques. Mais je viens de bouleverser tout le parti Republicain en maltraitant, dans une chronique, le Préfet de l'endroit. Il paraît qu'il est exaspéré. Gare la vendetta. Je ne sors plus sans un clysopompe à six pointes dans ma poche. Je vais le rattraper dans notre journal<sup>32</sup> où nous insultons toute autorité établie, à commencer par le nommé Dieu, dont l'autorité d'ailleurs ne me paraît pas indiscutable.

J'ai fait de superbes excursions dans les montagnes. Je chasse, je pêche, je canote à la voile sur la Méditerranée, etc., etc.

Depuis un mois que je suis ici, nous avons eu deux heures de pluie, un orage qui passait venant de France. Tout le reste du temps le ciel est resté immuablement bleu. Je me baigne deux fois par jour dans la mer tellement tiède qu'on n'éprouve en entrant aucune sensation de fraîcheur. Le thermomètre marque 32 à l'ombre toute la journée. Voilà un climat.

Adieu, ma chère Cousine, je vous baise les mains en vous envoyant mille compliments affectueux, et j'embrasse sur le nez notre grand peintre paysagiste.

Guy de Maupassant

ARTINE ARTINIAN

*Bard College*

29. Originally the villa was to be named "La Maison Tellier," but Maupassant submitted to his mother's objections and named it instead "La Guillette."

30. Apparently a servant in the Maupassant household, to whom reference is twice made in Maupassant's published correspondence, in 1870 and in 1891 (cf. work in note 14, pp. 197, 393).

31. Cf. Pierre Borel, and "Petit Bleu," *Le Destin Tragique de Guy de Maupassant*, Paris, Editions de France, 1927, pp. 35-39; also Auriant, "Un Ami de Maupassant: Harry Allis," *Mercur de France*, 1<sup>er</sup> mai, 1931, pp. 609-610.

32. The "Comédie Humaine" referred to above.



## NATURE AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN *LA VORAGINE*<sup>1</sup>

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THE "GREEN HELL" which dominates Rivera's single masterpiece is ostensibly, according to the literary pretense of the prologue, not his own creation but a factual account of reality by three informants: Arturo Cova (the fictitious author and poet-hero of the novel), Clemente Silva, and Ramiro Estévez. To these three first-person narrators, his literary emissaries, Rivera entrusts his social thesis and the detailed description of the tropical rain-forest environment which, as the title suggests, is essentially the main protagonist of *La voragine*.

Perhaps no author as high-minded and serious as Rivera has ever presented an extensive study of nature through the eyes and emotions of characters so incapable of describing nature in an objective fashion. It seems that Rivera has unconsciously injected a most puzzling dilemma into the literary complex of characters, nature description, and social aims. If, on the one hand, he is identified psychologically and philosophically with his main narrator, Arturo Cova—if it is believed that Rivera subscribed to the attitudes toward life exhibited by his main characters and agreed with their interpretation of nature—then there can be but little doubt that *La voragine* is one of the most astonishing public revelations of an author's "inner soul" in literary history, comparable only, perhaps, to that of Swift. If, on the other hand, it is presumed that Rivera's intention was to create a purely imaginative work in which the characters, their philosophy, and their vision of natural reality was to be independently their own (in consonance with what Rivera believed to be most in accord with their psychological attributes), then it must be assumed that the author saw no significant objection to entrusting his story and his obvious social thesis to a first-person narrator whose competence as an accurate and trustworthy reporter is rendered questionable by the personality Rivera chose to give him.

Whichever alternative is accepted for the moment, the psychology, the philosophy of life, and the behavior of Arturo Cova become the portal through which the nature presented in *La voragine* must be observed.

Arturo Cova is, on the surface, the stereotyped hero of an adventure novel, but on closer observation he emerges as a character who seems to have been drawn directly from some textbook of abnormal psychology. Cova is, by any standard, inadequate to deal with his problems and highly unstable emotionally. During the seven months of his life presented in *La voragine* he frequently weeps over his misfortunes and frustrations (pages

1. A shorter version of this paper was presented to the Latin American section of the Modern Language Association meeting at Detroit, December, 1947.



23, 25, 58, 118, 210, 225, 252).<sup>2</sup> Cova's self-confidence is so weak that his ego and vanity are easily hurt (45, 53, 216, 217) and he must rationalize his own defeats (64, 105). He is so extremely jealous (40, 55, 66) that he contemplates murder (57). He goes to great lengths to establish his reputation for manliness (45, 60, 79, 80, 195, 207), he turns misanthropic and hates his friends because they pity him and are kind to him (105), and he feels the need of ego-building, self-praise (12, 19, 20, 226).

Cova has great difficulty controlling his temper and becomes angry very easily (40, 45, 49, 53, 55, 68, 133, 179). He is often extremely quarrelsome and quick to fight (18, 31, 59, 61, 62, 132-134, 221); he has frequent urges to kill people (31, 123, 181, 186, 238), and finally does commit homicide (258). He drinks excessively without being able to get drunk (245) and when in a drunken rage (57-58) strikes his hostess, insults his mistress, and threatens to kill anyone who comes near him. He alternates between moods of despondency, elation, and rage (24, 51, 57-58, 252), suffers from insomnia (12, 35, 48, 140), nightmares (36, 51), hysterical laughter (98), and exhibits, during emotional crises, physical disorders which have no organic cause (70, 122, 246). He worries about whether he is sane or insane (128, 180), is incapable of controlling himself and gouges his head with his fingernails until it bleeds during one nervous crisis (123) and breaks his fingernails on a table during another (250).

In spite of all his bravado and apparent daring Arturo Cova is not a man who can face the world of reality and the consequences of his own actions. After he has seduced Alicia (11), an interest of a passing moment, he flees with her from Bogotá in order to escape social criticism and the possibility of a jail sentence, but when the full consequences of his actions are clearly laid out before him he secretly hopes that they will be captured so he will be freed of the responsibility of Alicia (13). His inclination to run away from difficulties, however, has a still more serious side. He is also haunted by the urge to commit suicide (99, 117). He threatens to do so once (57) and actually prepares to shoot himself on another occasion, but he lies in his hammock with his jaw against the muzzle of his carbine without being able to bring himself to pull the trigger (117). Having failed in this attempt to escape his difficulties, he kills himself symbolically in a fit of hysteria during which he imagines himself suddenly paralyzed, dying, being pronounced dead, and being buried (128).

The abnormalities of the man to whom the greater part of the nature description of *La vorágine* is entrusted do not, however, stop with these. Cova is tormented by illusions and hallucinations: a house whirls through the air before his eyes; he thinks he is an eagle and tries to fly; the ground moves in the opposite direction when he attempts to walk (57-58). The forest, in Clemente Silva's opinion, bewitches him. The trees take on fantastic shapes, his head seems excessively heavy, and he walks sideways

2. Since frequency is as important as content in this matter, references are placed in the text. The edition is that of Buenos Aires, 1941.

with his head cocked over his shoulder while a spirit voice encourages him in this idiosyncrasy, and he finally runs frantically in all directions howling with fear (181).

This inability to distinguish between reality and non-reality naturally leads Cova into many flights of day-dreaming (46, 47, 64, 79, 181) in which mild delusions of grandeur are not uncommon. Although he is almost penniless, a refugee from the law, and without occupation or any concrete possibilities of making a living, he imagines that he has suddenly become rich in the cattle trade. He returns to Bogotá an envied hero, brags of his exploits, overcomes all social opposition to his escapades, becomes a literary light, takes a degree, and is adored by his former women friends (46-47); or he becomes the embattled hero of the *selva*, sets in action governmental machinery to free the rubber gatherers from their slavery, personally kills their worst enemy in the presence of Alicia and the slaves, and hears his companions exclaim: "¡El implacable Cova nos vengó a todos y se internó por este desierto!" (181.) His exploits in the world of fantasy are sometimes so real to him that after having dreamt them he behaves as though they were true (47, 58).

It should be obvious at this point, especially if it is kept in mind that the novel deals with only a few months of Cova's life, that the vortex, the symbol of the whole novel, is as much in the tortured and unstable mind of Cova as it is in the realities with which he comes in contact, and that, as a result, Cova is hardly capable of seeing the objective world of nature in a realistic fashion.

This air of unreality, and the enigma about Rivera's aims and intentions, are intensified by Cova's thoroughly romantic attitude toward life. Arturo Cova, in addition to the psychological abnormalities which have already been catalogued, exhibits many of the abnormal attitudes which are particularly common among romantics. He is a Childe Harold pretending to be a bored Don Juan (24), while inside, his heart is filled with aching loneliness (25). He is proud of an individuality and non-conformity which are the result of neurotic compulsions (25) and pleased, in spite of his miserable experiences, over the daring and spectacular nature of his exploits (226).

Since Cova is incapable of controlling either his emotions or, as a natural consequence, his own destiny, he feels that he is plunging through life haunted by an inexorable fate:

... Los que un tiempo creyeron que mi inteligencia irradiaría extraordinariamente, cual una aureola de mi juventud; los que se olvidaron de mí apenas mi planta descendió al infortunio; los que al recordarme alguna vez piensen en mi fracaso y se pregunten por qué no fui lo que pude haber sido, sepan que el destino implacable me desarraigó de la prosperidad incipiente y me lanzó a las pampas, para que ambulara, vagabundo, como los vientos, y me extinguiera como ellos sin dejar más que ruido y desolación.<sup>3</sup>

3. Excerpt from a fictitious letter by Cova quoted by Rivera as an appendix to his prologue.

Death, his heart tells him, is his destiny (136) and he plunges onward blindly, unaware that other alternatives might exist:

Pero no me verán buscarle la curva al peligro. Iré de frente, contrariando la reflexión, sordo al oscuro aviso que se eleva desde el fondo de mi conciencia: ¡morir, morir! (238.)

Cova, in typical romantic fashion, is forever searching for some mysterious, ideal, and ineffable happiness and, with doom upon him and the air of the martyr, he weeps, like Rubén Darío, "por mis aspiraciones engañadas, por mis ensueños desvanecidos, por lo que no fui, por lo que ya no seré jamás" (25). His dream solutions of life's problems are illusory and romantic. He will settle down with Alicia on the plains in a "casa risueña" built with his own hands.

Allí de tarde se congregarían los ganados, y yo, fumando en el umbral, como un patriarca primitivo de pecho suavizado por la melancolía de los paisajes, vería las puestas del sol en el horizonte remoto donde nace la noche; y libre ya de las vanas aspiraciones, del engaño de los triunfos efímeros, limitaría mis anhelos a cuidar de la zona que abarcaran mis ojos, al goce de las faenas campesinas, a mi consonancia con la soledad. (77-78.)

His treatment of love and marriage is, in the modern concept of the sociologist, romantic and infantile. He feels that he can be unjust and violent with Alicia and, after insulting and abandoning her, expect her to come to him and beg his pardon (64), and he believes that all his love problems can be solved only by some day finding "la mujer ideal y pura, cuyos brazos brinden serenidad para los vicios y las pasiones" (235).

The romantic philosophy which characterizes Arturo Cova is not an attitude restricted primarily to the poet-hero of *La vorágine*. Rivera has cast a heavy shadow of romanticism over the entire novel. He seems to have selected his supporting characters, historically real as they are in many instances,<sup>4</sup> with the feelings of a romantic. Aside from the inevitable group which the idealist must fight (the hostile elements of society), the more important characters fall into two categories: the exotic type, the mysterious *madona*, Zoraida Ayram; *El Cayeno*, who has escaped by superhuman efforts from the prisons of Devil's Island; Pipa, the renegade bandit-outlaw, who lives with the Indians and possesses diabolic knowledge; and the second group who, significantly, relate most of the novel in the first person and who are stereotyped by Rivera according to the principal standards of romanticism. They are outcast by and fighting against society, on the one hand, and all the world of nature, on the other. There is Cova himself, the main protagonist, romantic to the core, and Griselda, who kills a man to save her honor, and Franco who for love of her deserts from the army and gallantly assumes responsibility for the murder. Both flee from society in a

4. See Eduardo Neale-Silva, "The Factual Bases of *La vorágine*," *PMLA*, LIV (1939), 316-331.

desperate attempt to build a new life in the *llanuras*. There is Clemente Silva, whose daughter is seduced, whose reputation is besmirched and who, forsaken in this crisis by his friends, goes with strange compulsions to spend sixteen years searching for his son's bones in order to fulfill a promise made over the dead body of his bereaved wife. And, lastly, there is half-blind Ramiro Estévez, frustrated in his one great love of a woman by the rules of social stratification, who plunges into the forest to forget and be forgotten.

Rivera seems to have placed no great significance on the fact that his major characters are all suffering from especially tense emotional stresses and that the compulsions which drive them into the *selva*, the vortex, are contained largely within themselves or are the direct products of their own behavior. He prefers, rather, to picture his characters as driven by fate, chance, and a hostile society into the forest. Since they are at once confronted with an entirely new environment which they are inadequately prepared to meet, either psychologically or practically, they are naturally beset by constant fears and a strong sense of foreboding which are not an accurate reflection of the objective character of the environment. This fact is extremely significant in setting the major tones for the treatment of nature in *La vorágine*. The narrating characters disregard their own frailties and place the causes for their fears entirely outside of themselves, that is, they project them upon the environment. Rivera accepts this rationalization and, as a result, the new environment must of necessity be depicted as actually being as horrible as his characters' reaction to it. The interpretation of nature which is to emerge from the novel will be, consequently, distorted in direct proportion to the characters' inability to dominate their emotions and to establish a proper cause and effect explanation of their own fears.

Cova, very early in the novel, establishes this pattern by comparing himself and Alicia to a seed swept aimlessly before the wind, afraid of the land that is awaiting them (17). This is the normal fear of the unknown, but it is soon converted, because of Cova's excessive lack of emotional security, into an exaggerated foreboding of evil and doom by a horrible nightmare in which he sees Alicia going across a "sabana lúgubre, hacia un lugar siniestro." He is watching her and trying to protect her against the advances of Barrera, but every time he points his gun it becomes a "serpiente helada y rígida," and, meanwhile, Don Rufo shouts at him: "¡Véngase! ¡Eso ya no tiene remedio!" (35-36.)

The dream goes on in an even more macabre tone and, although clearly evidence of Cova's abnormalities and subconscious fears of the future, it is apparently aimed by the author at creating an unfavorable emotional reaction in the reader to the whole new and "horrible" world into which Cova and Alicia are about to plunge.

Vefa luego a la niña Griselda, vestida de oro, en un país extraño, encaramada

en una peña de cuya base fluía un hilo blancuzco de caucho. A lo largo de él lo bebían gentes innumerables echadas de bruces. Franco, erguido sobre un promontorio de carabinas, amonestaba a los sedientos con este estribillo: "Infelices, detrás de estas selvas está el más allá!" Y al pie de cada árbol se iba muriendo un hombre, en tanto que yo recogía sus calaveras para exportarlas en lanchones por un río silencioso y oscuro. (36.)

Cova's neurotic fears and compulsions serve Rivera as a useful device to build up this atmosphere of doom and destruction with which nature must be in consonance, and in a fashion strongly reminiscent of Isaac's *María*, the novel is liberally sprinkled with prognostications of death and destruction which Cova reports in retrospect. A few examples are cited below:

Brindemos los tres por la fortuna y el amor.

¡Ilusos! Debimos brindar por el dolor y la muerte! (47.)

Volvió luego a rendirme el sueño. ¡Ah, si hubiera sentido lo que entonces debió de pasar! (78.)

Aquel río, sin ondulaciones, sin espumas, era mudo, téticamente mudo como el presagio, y daba la impresión de un camino oscuro que se moviera hacia el vórtice de la nada. (102.)

Claramente, desde aquel día, tuve el presentimiento de lo fatal. (136.)

Amigos míos, faltaría a mi conciencia y a mi lealtad si no declarara en este momento, como anoche, que sois libres de seguir vuestra propia estrella, sin que mi suerte os detenga el paso. Más que en mi vida pensad en la vuestra. Dejadme solo, que mi destino desarrollará su trayectoria. Aun es tiempo de regresar a donde queráis. El que siga mi ruta va con la muerte. (136.)

It would be amazing indeed to discover that Rivera's treatment of nature in *La vorágine* did not reflect the peculiar emotions and distorted attitudes of his characters and the general romantic tone which pervades all other aspects of the novel. Rivera does not, as Earle K. James felt, blast "Arcadian conceptions of idyllic nature" with "furious realism."<sup>5</sup> He is forced, rather, by the exigencies of his story and thesis, to describe unpleasant things—maggots in open sores, man-eating fish, armies of carnivorous ants, filth and slime—but his method, the technique which creates the nature atmosphere of the novel, can hardly be classified as that of the realist.

Arturo Cova, in one of his dreamy flights of fancy, expresses, almost as a literary pronouncement, the basic attitude from which Rivera's description of nature springs:

Quizá mi fuente de poesía estaba en el secreto de los bosques intactos, en la caricia de las auras, en el idioma desconocido de las cosas; en cantar lo que dice el peñón a la onda que se despide, el arrebol a la ciénaga, la estrella a las inmensidades que guardan el silencio de Dios. (78.)

5. Introduction to *The Vortex*, London, 1935, p. x.

Cova, the pretended author, in keeping with his character, is hardly capable of looking upon the external world of nature with the eyes of a realist. He must poetize nature, idealize it, project upon it his moods, feelings, and emotional reactions. By his hypostatizations he makes it, in short, anthropomorphic. Since there is a whirling vortex in his own mind there must also be a vortex of equal violence in nature, and, as a result, nature is endowed with human attributes and made to harmonize with the states of mind of the characters observing it. Rivera generalizes this attitude to all his characters and nature is made as horrible as their moods.

When Cova recalls the moment he left the savanna and plunged into the *selva*, the scene before his eyes is, in contrast with his miserable life in the tropical forest, most delightful, and the plains, in memory's eye, are lost in a "nébula dulce" and he thinks of colors of rose and opal, "crepúsculos cariñosos," and a "cielo amigo" (102). When he can no longer endure with emotional equilibrium the realities of the *selva* and is tormented by thoughts of insanity, by terrifying illusions and dreadful hallucinations, he turns against his own and romantic idealism in general and, in an agony of emotional desperation, cries out:

¿Cuál es aquí la poesía de los retiros? ¿Dónde están las mariposas que parecen flores traslúcidas, los pájaros mágicos, el arroyo cantor? ¡Pobre fantasía de los poetas que sólo conocen las soledades domesticadas!

¡Nada de ruiseñores enamorados! ¡Nada de jardín versallesco! ¡Nada de panoramas sentimentales! Aquí los resposos de sapos hidrópicos, las malezas de cerros misántropos, los rebalsos de caños podridos. (183.)

The "affectionate twilights" and "friendly skies" have disappeared with Cova's changing mood and are replaced by a fantasmagoric and misanthropic nature, the "*selva inhumana*" (182).

As Cova's psychological insecurity mounts he generalizes his emotional reactions to apply to everything about him and carefully selects, as a rationalization of his own inadequacy, everything he finds horrible for description: "árboles deformes," "reptiles ciegos" (182), "hormigas devastadoras," "flores inmundas," "la liana maligna," etc. (183). The Amazon forest, whose many natural beauties have been delightfully and objectively described by both laymen and scientists, becomes a seething, writhing, tortured mass of disgusting life struggling in a kind of botanical warfare and tainted by "el hálito del fermento, los vapores calientes de la penumbra, el sopor de la muerte, el marasmo de la procreación" (183).

It has been customary to take this passage seriously as an exact description of the stark reality of the background against which the story of the novel takes place.<sup>6</sup> Serious doubt, however, may be cast upon Rivera's intentions by two very contradictory descriptions of the same forest. In another paragraph of this same passage, Rivera has Cova say:

6. See Arturo Torres-Rioseco, *The Epic of Latin American Literature*, New York, 1942, pp. 179-180.



Por primera vez, en todo su horror, se ensanchó ante mí la selva inhumana. Árboles deformes sufren el cautiverio de las enredaderas advenedizas, que a grandes trechos los ayuntan con las palmeras y se descuelgan en curva elástica, semejantes a redes mal extendidas, que a fuerza de almacenar en años enteros hojarascas, chamizas, frutas, se desfondan como un saco de podredumbre, vaciando en la yerba reptiles ciegos, salamandras mohosas, arañas peludas.

Por doquiera el bejuco de matapalo—rastrero pulpo de las florestas—pega sus tentáculos a los troncos, acogotándolos y retorciéndolos, para injertárselos y trasfundirselos en metempsicosis dolorosas. (182-183.)

At first glance this appears to be description motivated only by a desire to be objective with only slight weighting on the side of the unpleasant, but when Cova is in a different mood the same vegetation which appears here struggling in a "fratricidal" war is described locked in amorous solidarity. Notice especially how the terrible "enredaderas" and "bejuocos" of the above paragraph become the bearers of a friendly embrace:

Tus [the selva's] vegetales forman sobre la tierra la poderosa familia que no se traiciona nunca. El abrazo que no pueden darse tus romanzones (sic: Ramanzones?) lo llevan las enredaderas y los bejuocos, y eres solidaria hasta en el dolor de la hoja que cae. (99.)

The most acceptable artistic significance of the first description would seem to lie not in its being an accurate word-picture of the selva, "furious realism," but a very precise description of Cova's frantic reaction to it. In this sense it may well be considered entirely realistic and valid artistically. Much of what Cova sees is true, but he cannot free himself of his anthropomorphic attitude toward nature and is incapable of seeing his situation objectively and realistically. He does not properly evaluate his own emotional instability and so places the causes of his fears upon the forest which, after all, is totally incapable of reacting to him in the fashion his fancy presumes. His rationalization, however, endows it with peculiarly human psychology:

Esta selva sádica y virgen procura al ánimo la alucinación del peligro próximo. El vegetal es un ser sensible cuya psicología desconocemos. En estas soledades, cuando nos habla, sólo entiende su idioma el presentimiento. Bajo su poder, los nervios del hombre se convierten en haz de cuerdas, distendidas hacia el salto, hacia la traición, hacia la asechanza. Los sentidos humanos equivocan sus facultades: el ojo siente, la espalda ve, la nariz explora, las piernas calculan y la sangre clama: ¡Huyamos, huyamos! (184.)

Cova cannot recognize a simple case of hysteria, and Rivera lets the attitude pass as though Cova's explanation were completely acceptable. This is not poetic description or mere romantic exaggeration; it is the stark account of a man so frightened that he is on the verge of psychological collapse.

This vagueness of perception of the real problem is not a special characteristic of Cova as a created character. It is, rather, an attitude toward



the forest which Rivera shares with all of his main characters. Clemente Silva also tries, in a manner very similar to Cova's, to explain a like situation:

—Nadie ha sabido cuál es la causa del misterio que nos trastorna cuando vagamos en la selva. Sin embargo, creo acertar en la explicación: cualquiera de estos árboles se amansaría, tornándose amistoso y hasta risueño, en un parque, en un camino, en una llanura, donde nadie lo sangrara ni lo persiguiera; mas aquí todos son perversos, o agresivos, o hipnotizantes. En estos silencios, bajo estas sombras, tienen su manera de combatirnos: algo nos asusta, algo nos crispa, algo nos oprime, y viene el mareo de las espesuras, y queremos huir y nos extraviarnos, y por esta razón miles de caucheros no volvieron a salir nunca. (182.)

Silva, like Cova, describes a typical case of hysteria, yet he feels that somehow the forest must be to blame.

Ramiro Estévez, the third important first-person narrator of *La vorágine*, is also depicted by Rivera as believing in the strange powers of the *selva*. Since he cannot face his own life problems and therefore subconsciously does not wish to leave the forest, he rationalizes his behavior and subscribes to the belief that the forest has the power to hold men as though in some enchantment:

Un sino de fracaso y maldición persigue a cuantos explotan la mina verde. La selva los aniquila; la selva los retiene: la selva los llama para tragárselos. Los que escapan, aunque se refugien en las ciudades, llevan ya el maleficio en cuerpo y en alma. Mustios, envejecidos, decepcionados, no tienen más que una aspiración: volver, volver, a sabiendas de que si vuelven perecerán. (234.)

It should by now begin to be more than evident that Rivera was somewhat confused about his task as a novelist. On the one hand, he creates characters who, either because of personality distortions or great emotional strain, are particularly incapable of describing nature in an objective fashion, and, on the other hand, he builds his novel on the assumption that what they report will be accepted as actual reality by his readers. Rivera seems not to have been able to distinguish sharply between what his characters might legitimately do and feel as characters and what was permitted to him as an author with a thesis to be developed.

It is obvious, of course, that a character in a novel may believe whatever he likes: that trees have souls and hate people, that it is wise to offer propitiatory prayers to a vengeful nature, that forests have evil powers of enchantment, and that his rationalizations produce scientific facts, but the author must clearly rise above the ignorance and superstitions of his characters and maintain a sharp distinction between the "reality" his characters observe and the objective reality which his characters misinterpret and distort. That Rivera did not seem to grasp the importance of such a distinction is more sharply outlined by the artistic devices he employs in his description of nature.

Rivera demonstrates, in *Tierra de promisión*,<sup>7</sup> that as a poet he is a member of that school of writers which uses anthropomorphic metaphors as a means of embellishing style and as a device for evoking easy emotional responses. However, when he turns to the novel and creates his poet-hero-narrator, Arturo Cova, he does not seem to comprehend clearly that what may be put down as merely pretty writing in a perfectly normal poet can hardly be interpreted in the same fashion when presented by a character whose profound psychological disturbances naturally cause him to project human characteristics upon nature. The resulting figures may look alike, but in the first case both the poet and the reader are aware of the metaphorical pretense. In the second instance, the character actually feels that nature possesses human characteristics: trees can "hate," hills can be "misanthropic," and the *selva* can "conspire" against man. There is no longer any pretense. Critical judgment has been overwhelmed by emotion and metaphor and fact are assumed to be identical.

There are, consequently, two kinds of anthropomorphism in *La vorágine*: that of the poet who pretends, and that of the man who cannot see clearly. Both are in constant artistic conflict with each other.

In the first part of the novel, where Rivera is simply describing nature prettily, Cova talks of the "garzas meditabundas" (20), a "brisa discreta" (36), stars that "se adormecieron" (20), and a "constelación taciturna" (12). The palm trees are especially endowed with human characteristics. At times they bow down their heads "humillándose hacia el oriente" (19); they "greet" the returning bronco-busters with "tremulantes cabeceos" (43), and after a storm they straighten themselves up "con miedo" (36). They "groan" before the "insolent power" of the wind (85), and they are "heroic" before the storm and die in it without "humiliating themselves" (85).

However one judges this type of writing, whether one accepts it as a serious and legitimate attempt at poetic description or condemns it, with John Ruskin, as the pathetic fallacy and merely bad poetics, the fact remains that Rivera places himself in a serious artistic dilemma by using such devices. Throughout *La vorágine* he builds up the character of his fictitious author as a man incapable of distinguishing between illusion and reality, between his own hypostatizations and objective nature; yet in the first part of the novel Rivera has Cova so clear in his perception of nature that he can dally with these literary metaphors simply for stylistic effects and, in the second part, he has him honestly believing that the nature created by such figures in his imagination is objective reality. At the same time, Rivera, as the real author, seems to expect these devices to recreate artistically the true realities of the *selva*.

When the reader is introduced to the *selva* he meets it as a personification: "Oh, selva, esposa del silencio, madre de la soledad y de la neblina"

7. Santiago de Chile, 1941.

(99). From this point on, in the windows of the characters' tortured emotions, it is the "selva inhumana," and its inhabitants, plants, and geographical features are humanized and leagued against man. Its rivers and streams are "sinister" (225), "invidious" (205), "perfidious" (203), "savage" (101), and "sobbing" (186). Its days are "vicious" (235), its islands "barbaric" (258), its hills "misanthropic" (109), its rains "impertinent" (123), and its branches "rebellious" (218). The trees are "perverse, aggressive, hypnotical" (182); they make signs (193) and gestures (192). The selva "hates" the people who gather rubber (213); it must be treated properly or it will be "provoked" (198); it is the people's "enemy" (184). The forest is "aggressive" (124) and "defends itself" against its attackers (140), but, worst of all, it possesses a horrible power which drives men mad (141), perverts them (228), and holds them as though in some mad enchantment (186).

Whatever the realities of the selva may be, these figures convert it into a hobgoblin forest out of an evil fairy tale.

One might suppose, granted Cova's emotional state, that this type of description was a legitimate product of his psychological disturbances and personality distortions. However, as has already been pointed out, every character whom Rivera has describe the forest sees it the same way. Clemente Silva, when lost during an attempt to escape, looks up at the high trees and wonders: "¿Por qué los árboles silenciosos han de negarse a decirle al hombre lo que debe hacer para no morir?" And, then, with a mixture of paganism and Christianity, he begins, in the desperation of fear, to "rezarle a la selva una plegaria de desagravio" (195).

Another description of Silva's plight during the same episode sharpens his attitude toward the forest. Cova presents the passage in indirect discourse. Silva is talking to his companions:

¿Para qué se pusieron a pensar en el extravío? ¿No los había instruído una y otra vez en la urgencia de desechar esa tentación, que la espesura infunde en el hombre para trastornarlo? Él les aconsejó no mirar los árboles, porque hacen señas, ni escuchar los murmurios, porque dicen cosas, ni pronunciar palabras, porque los ramajes remedan la voz. Lejos de acatar esas instrucciones, entraron en chanzas con la floresta y les vino el embrujamiento, que se transmite como por contagio; y él también, aunque iba adelante, comenzó a sentir el influjo de los malos espíritus, porque la selva principió a moverse, los árboles le bailaban ante los ojos, los bejuqueros no le dejaban abrir la trocha, las ramas se le escondían bajo el cuchillo y repetidas veces quisieron quitárselo. (193-194.)

Silva, after sixteen years in the selva, can see it no more objectively than Cova or Ramiro Estévez.

It is extremely important in an analysis of Rivera's art that the three persons in *La vorágine* who give any significant description of nature all are presented as romantic types, that all three are endowed with emotionally

unstable characters, that Arturo Cova, the main narrator, is psychotic, that all three, in practically every description they give, make nature anthropomorphic, and that, finally, it is through the weird emotional reactions of these three people that the anthropomorphic monster of a *selva* is created which Rivera, as the real author in the epilogue, accepts without any hesitation. The horrid brain-child of his characters' overwrought imaginations comes to have a real existence in his mind also and Rivera is satisfied to end his novel on this note with a final anthropomorphic metaphor: "¡Los devoró la selva!"

This ending raises the paradox inherent in *La vorágine* to its peak. If Rivera's thesis, the exposé of "la desolada historia de los caucheros" (260), is to be taken seriously, then it must be assumed that his own identification with his characters was so complete that their interpretation of the realities of the forest and his own were identical. Such an assumption implies a startling consequence which is drawn with great caution, namely, that Rivera did not comprehend that the vortex was, in a large measure, in the minds of his characters, that his novel, instead of being the tale of the rubber gatherers, is essentially the strange story of emotionally distraught, idealistic romantics suffering the agonizing process of defeat and disillusionment on contact with a grim reality which they were neither philosophically nor psychologically prepared to meet.

Such a conclusion, perforce, implies that Rivera did not consider his characters to be abnormal and this, presumably, could have been possible only if his identity with them was complete. The positive answer to this question must be provided by Rivera's biographers.

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## REVIEWS

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Estienne Jodelle: *Cléopâtre captive*. A critical edition by Lowell Bryce Ellis. (University of Pennsylvania, Publication of the Series in Romance Languages and Literatures. Extra Series No. 9) Philadelphia, 1946. Pp. x + 128.

The best description of the *Cléopâtre captive* is still that of Faguet: "une élégie en quatre actes suivie d'un récit." But the first classical tragedy in French deserves our attention even if mainly for its illustrious descendants. Dr. Ellis' critical edition is a careful and sound piece of work, with a compact and readable Introduction that summarizes previous Jodelle scholarship and treats at about equal length the questions of Style, Composition, Sources, Language and Versification. He puts as good a case for his author, it seems to me, as can be put, yet he rarely falls into special pleading. He rightly reminds us that many of the weaknesses of the *Cléopâtre* are traits of style advocated by Du Bellay and Ronsard and used badly or to excess by Jodelle: classical allusions, periphrases, metaphors, repetitions and the like. Dr. Ellis seems to go too far, however, when he concludes his remarks on this subject by saying (page 19) that "the style of the *Cléopâtre* is a faithful illustration of the theories of the Pléiade"; especially since he has already acknowledged the hasty composition that was anathema to the new school, the confused syntax, and the abuse of repetition, which in one place occurs seven times in thirteen lines (230-242). Again, I think he demands too much when he says (page 56) that "Any judgment of Jodelle as an artist or of the *Cléopâtre* as an example of dramatic art must *depend* [italics mine] upon certain historical facts": to wit, his youth, his ambition and his impatience, mentioned on page 55 and again on page 56. The only judgment that I can see as *depending* on these facts is the judgment of Jodelle's potentialities, which is another matter. A weak play is a weak play, and furthermore Jodelle did no better later. Dr. Ellis is wiser, I think, in the general conclusion of his Introduction (page 57): "Jodelle proved that tragedy in French was feasible. We can only regret that he did not at the same time prove that he could write a masterpiece."

The text of the *Cléopâtre* is cleanly and attractively presented, though it would have been more readable if split lines had been separated in the usual way, or at least (in case this seemed too great a departure from what I presume was the original arrangement) if the abbreviations of the speakers' names had been italicized to set them off from their words. I have noted only two misprints, neither of them confusing: "Où est tu, Mort" (line 657); and "grande" (line 1500), which apparently should be "grands" to rhyme with "flanes" in the preceding line and agree with "courages"

stead of "fureur" ("Quelque fureur de courages plus grands?"). The discussion and the running notes on the language seem good; though here I should have liked ready information (without having to run to Godefroy, Marty-Laveaux *et al.*) on such words, rare at least to the linguistic layman, as the verb "caver" in line 929 ("la pierre on caue bien"), "hommagers" (line 1068) in the sense of "homage-bearing," "dextre" with a connotation of threat ("Contre toute dextre," line 1405), and "escheller" with a personal direct object ("quand tes fils Iupiter eschellerent," line 1501). Where Dr. Ellis in his Introduction lists two cases of "du tout" as uses of *du* for *de*, both could be simply the familiar sixteenth-century *du tout* 'completely.' Much more could be said about "pieds de laine" (line 118) than the comparison with "jambes de laine," especially since the context clearly suggests slow feet and not weak knees: under *laineux*, Cotgrave lists "marcher avec les pieds laineux" in the sense of "go softly, tread gingerly"; Littré quotes him and corrects the sense to "marcher lentement"; and Aubigné urges God in *Les Tragiques* (I, line 1377): "Leve ton bras de fer, haste tes pieds de laine." And there appears to be a bad slip when a note describes "sagette" (line 1325), which in context seems clearly the obvious derivative from *sagitta* 'arrow,' as "a diminutive."

I would have liked to know Dr. Ellis' opinion on the intriguing question of the versification: why Acts I and IV are in alexandrines (the former all feminine), Acts II, III and V in decasyllables. Is it possible that Jodelle had a reason, however weak in our eyes: for example that his heroine's absence from Acts II and V and her undignified behavior in Act III called for decasyllables, her presence and stature in Acts I and IV for the newer and more majestic verse? If, as I suppose is the case, no such conjectural explanation seems tenable, I should have liked to know why.

The fact remains that Dr. Ellis has done a careful and competent piece of work in his summary of Jodelle scholarship and in making the first French tragedy more readily available and understandable to students of French. This is no small service.

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*Le Registre de La Grange, 1659-1685, reproduit en facsimilé avec un index et une notice sur La Grange et sa part dans le théâtre de Molière.* Par Bert Edward Young et Grace Philpott Young. (Bibliothèque de la Société des Historiens du Théâtre, XXIII, XXIV) Paris, Librairie E. Droz, 1947, 2 vols. Pp. 392+192. 22 planches hors-texte.

The *Registre* de La Grange has since its publication in 1876<sup>1</sup> been an

1. *Registre de La Grange* (1656-1685), précédé d'une notice biographique, publié par les soins de la Comédie-Française. Archives de la Comédie-Française, Paris, J. Claye, 1876. The "Notice biographique," supplemented by the "Dossier de La Grange," was published separately the same year by Edouard Thierry, under the title *Charles Varlet de La Grange et son registre*, Paris, J. Claye. Both of these works are now very rare.



indispensable tool for all true students of Molière and of the history of the theatre of his time. There is something thrilling in this contemporary record kept by a member of the troupe itself—more than that, by one who enjoyed the confidence of Molière and of his fellow actors, often charged by them with great responsibility. He it was who kept the troupe together after the death of Molière and had much to do with preserving and transmitting the spirit of the master in the merger with other troupes. His devotion to the leader and to the welfare of the troupe, his probity, courage, good judgment, and tact are constantly evident in the marginal notes and comments which make of the *Registre* much more than an authoritative account of dates of performances, receipts and expenses. The personality of the author adds vividness to his facts and figures.

All the more reason for gratitude to Professors Bert and Grace Young for the brilliant idea of preserving this priceless document in facsimile. Now it is possible to see the precious comments just as La Grange wrote them, with their blots, erasures, and symbolic figures—except that the latter are not in color. Fortunately the actor wrote a legible hand, for the most part. The work of reproduction was admirably done by orthochromatic photography, and the paper is of excellent quality. The editors and the printers are to be congratulated on the remarkably fine typography and appearance of the volume. Its usefulness is enhanced by page references to the printed volume of 1876, and an index, including not only names of authors and plays, but also *matières*, such as *artisans, musiciens, contrats, décorations, frais, machines*, etc. about which many useful items are found in the *Registre*.

In the second volume, the editors bring together all the known facts about Charles Varlet de La Grange, the man and the actor, and, above all, the author of the *Registre* and the devoted editor of the first collective edition of the works of Molière. They add no important new data, but trace his career from the time he entered the *troupe de Monsieur* as "acteur nouveau à Paris" at the age of 20, until his sudden death in 1692 when he was only 53. There is also a chapter on the *Registre*, with full description of the volume and its vicissitudes, comparisons with the printed edition of 1876, calling attention to certain errors, and with the other *Registres* in the possession of *La Comédie*—those of La Thorillière, of Hubert, and the two series of official *Registres*, the first, 1673–1681, and the second continuing from 1681 to the present. The cuts give facsimiles of some of the pages of the records, reproduce *affiches*, title pages of early editions, and the frontispiece of the *Festin de Pierre* of 1682, which is thought to give a contemporary likeness of La Grange.

The chapter on the "édition collective of 1682" goes into the complicated question of the various *recueils* and *privileges*, and offers a plausible explanation of the delay in bringing out a complete edition of Molière's plays as due in large measure to conflicting claims of the widow and various publishers, notably Ribou, Barbin, and Thierry, whose *privileges* for printing



certain comedies had not expired. The credit for the 1682 edition belongs to La Grange, whose loyalty, perseverance, and competence, both in business affairs and in familiarity with all Molière's plays, enabled him to triumph over all obstacles and bring out this "véritable édition originale."

The painstaking comparison with the other *registres*, date by date, title by title, and figure by figure, makes it possible to correct certain errors which had slipped into La Grange's record, which had evidently not been kept day by day.

The registers of La Thorillière, 1663-1665, and of Hubert, 1672-1673, seem to be the official records of the troupe, while that of La Grange was more personal. Both have their advantages and supplement each other. The same may be said of the later registers, official records on pages printed and bound for this purpose. The meticulous check for the years 1673 to 1685 has brought out certain divergencies in details given by them and by La Grange, which have been carefully noted and lead to interesting observations. Among others are puzzling allusions to the rôle which Donneau de Visé seems to have played in the negotiations following the death of Molière. Mention of the sum of 55 *livres* given to "Mr Chapusseau" in September 1673, suggests the query as to whether this gift had anything to do with the dedication to "la troupe du Roy" of the Moscow Manuscript of Chappuzeau's *Théâtre François*, which was published that same year. Some inaccuracies of La Grange in giving titles of plays presented by the troupe may be corrected by reference to this invaluable checking with other records.

It was this reviewer's privilege to enter the Archives of the Comédie Française under the guidance of the editors and authors of these volumes and to appreciate their familiarity with the treasures stored there. He was able to follow with interest the necessarily slow progress of this project, which has now been successfully brought to fruition. Great was the anxiety during the war when the reproductions by the official photographer of the Comédie, and part of the manuscript of the second volume, were at the Imprimerie Paillart at Abbeville, which was reportedly bombed fifty times. The good fortune which brought the original *Registre* safely back to the Archives of the Comédie Française after its disappearance on several occasions, and from the fire of 1900, again prevailed, and publication was completed after eight years. Now, thanks to Professors Bert and Grace Young, this exact reproduction will be available should destruction overtake the original. Moliéristes everywhere should be grateful for the facsimile of the *Registre*, a product of patient research and long familiarity with the author, Molière, and his times, as the second volume attests.

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Du contrat social*. Précédé d'un essai sur la politique de Rousseau par Bertrand de Jouvenel, accompagné des notes de Voltaire et d'autres contemporains de l'auteur. (Œuvres Immortelles, Les Editions du Cheval Ailé) Genève, Constant Bourquin, [1947]. Pp. 398.

The introductory essay of this attractive volume is a careful and orderly exposition and clarification of a difficult problem. Unlike some previous critics, the author sees no inconsistency or oscillation in Rousseau's major political work, no departure from the fundamental moral position of the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*. Far from being a paradox, his main contention was the commonly accepted belief among the ancients and among moralists since the ancients. Neither in this discourse nor in the *Contrat social* is there mention of the natural greatness of man. The aberration was rather in the *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*, described here as a mediocre work, in which Diderot's influence was unfortunately great. M. de Jouvenel apparently approves of Rousseau's diagnosis of the corruption of society through commerce and industrialization. But Rousseau's prescription reveals a fundamental weakness in his temperament, an inability to face the struggle that inevitably ensues between natural liberty and social restraint. The *Contrat social* offers a palliative rather than a remedy. And even this was unsatisfactory in itself and has been grossly misunderstood. From this discussion it appears again that the legendary Rousseau played a more important role in the history of ideas than the real Rousseau. It is well to know, however, how and why he was misunderstood.

It is Rousseau's well-known thesis that the advance of science and the technical arts, allied with commerce and industry, have brought man to his present pass. It has increased his needs and desires and inflamed his passion for luxury, wealth and power. The moralists have always opposed this trend. Rousseau pleads the cause of common sense and universal experience. Back of him were Plutarch, Plato, Polybius, Tacitus, Livy and Sallust.<sup>1</sup> Our commercial civilization, M. de Jouvenel believes, is the apotheosis of the *libido* in all its forms. Rousseau's attack was fundamental, though presumably he was concerned only with the *libido sciendi*: the philosophers who, after the good moral instruction of their predecessors, sought distinction in preaching the bad; the popularizers, because "la science n'est pas faite pour les hommes en général"; the artists, who are teachers of vice; the orators, whose eloquence M. de Jouvenel, with a fine flourish of rhetorical questions and using the example of Hitler, also eloquently condemns.

The first discourse, as Faguet saw, called for the *Contrat social*. But there was a flaw in Rousseau's character which he himself was the first to recog-

1. "All antiquity," says the author—but not quite: among the bad philosophers were Leucippus, Diogenes, Pyrrho, Protagoras, Lucretius, as well as their disciples, Hobbes and Mandeville.

nize. Duty was unable to govern his heart. His ideal was virtuous conduct, and heroic deeds fired his imagination, but their difficulty overpowered him. M. de Jouvenel regrets that in the mediocre second discourse Rousseau abandons his praise of Sparta and Fabricius for that of the ape-man and that, in illegitimate backward projection from man with all the vices occasioned by society, he found a presocial man, beneficent and generous, the idyllic image of the dweller in Arcadia. Here Rousseau firmly believed that he had proved through historical reconstruction what he had only felt through introspection.<sup>2</sup> He had already found natural man deep within himself, in his taste for solitude and reverie, the happiness of the pure feeling of existence, the gentle emotion of pity, the need of quitting the struggle of clashing interests and hatreds inherent in the social state.

But although natural man has become wicked, God is Rousseau's guarantee of man's primitive goodness. Society is, then, the corrupting influence, Bayle having ruined the idea of original sin for Rousseau's generation. Rousseau thus reanimated Christianity with a new apologetics. Conscience, which is to the soul as instinct is to the body, became his guide and he accepted the infallibility of moral sentiment. As politician, he remained the moralist and preached the ancient wisdom: simplicity, frugality and the enjoyment of nature. He hoped only to retard inevitable social decadence by changing man's desires. In large and corrupt societies, only the individual is salvageable. The preceptor of *Emile* forms the man, not the citizen. In small static communities, in which commerce is relatively undeveloped, man can still be happy, but only by reforming his nature, by making himself totally political. We must choose between giving man entirely to himself or entirely to the state. The *Contrat social* shows how man, by a process of complete denaturalization, can identify his ego with that of the state and thus avoid the struggle between natural man and legal society. All the one or all the other: there is no middle ground. The political solution of the conflict is possible perhaps only in Geneva, Corsica, or Poland. This conclusion is thus in sharp contrast with Voltaire's liberalism or Montesquieu's moderate democracy founded on political struggle and the balance of power.

"Contract," M. de Jouvenel finds, is a poor word for the mystic union that Rousseau has in mind. His general will is neither logical, expressed through general laws with ends only in view, nor juridical, through previous agreement to accept the majority will or the sovereign's will as one's own. The majority will denotes on the contrary, the absence or the silence of the general will, because it reveals a clash of particular interests; and debate and discussion are the early signs of political corruption. Rousseau's concept is mainly theological, comparable to what the eighteenth century called general Providence and what is today called a benevolent universe.

2. A. O. Lovejoy found the great innovation of this discourse to be the concept of a long period of evolution in the natural history of man. M. de Jouvenel ignores this aspect.

It is, however, an imperative of sentiment and not of reason, opposed to Diderot's rash statement that "no one was ever mistaken about the good" and Voltaire's idea of universal morality founded on the light of reason. A people must agree on the good of the whole group and *feel* it—they must possess the same "appareil sensible."

The corollaries to this questionable, or at least impractical scheme, are often unhappy. Civic education denatures the man but forms the citizen. The contract cannot be extended to the human race—it is narrowly patriotic and "tout patriote est dur aux étrangers." It seems certain that Rousseau would not want what his principles decreed; he sought relative freedom in his old age in Paris rather than in Geneva. By restricting his plan to small communities, large cities being too depraved to be saved, he certainly envisaged no fascist State. The citizens of his state—and only family men with property could be citizens—were free and expressed the general will only in full assembly.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, even if such ideal conditions could be met, history works inevitably towards the dissolution of the general will and attendant moral ruin. States, like individuals, are not eternal, but their life may be prolonged.

In conclusion, M. de Jouvenel notes how Rousseau's political construction reflects his favorite ideas: the country against the city; agriculture against commerce, simplicity as opposed to luxury, the mystic community of feeling rather than conciliation of conflicting ideas and compromise; traditionalism against progress. In Voltaire's comments can be found the germ of many of his works, as well as his diametrical opposition to nearly every one of Rousseau's most cherished ideals. Like that of many another visionary—or prophet—Rousseau's was a voice crying in the wilderness. Or rather it was so completely misunderstood that his tremendous influence can only be attributed to his legendary figure.

Yet it is not so patently absurd as M. de Jouvenel believes to link Rousseau's name with Voltaire's or Marx's or with political revolution. Dreyfus-Brisac was surely not entirely wrong in finding a revolutionary spirit in the *Contrat social*. Vaughan and many subsequent sincere and conscientious editors have been obliged to state rather than attempt to solve the dilemma.

It is not enough to explain, as Lanson did so brilliantly, the unity of Rousseau's thought. The middle generation of the eighteenth century had a tendency, mildly ridiculed by Voltaire, to distinguish oversharply between *l'esprit* et *le cœur*. Mme d'Epinay and Mme d'Houdetot were sure of the righteousness of Rousseau's heart but believed that his head was often wrong. Diderot lamented to Sophie Volland the contradictory attitudes of the two organs towards immortality but on another occasion insisted that he had never permitted himself the luxury of letting his head

3. M. de Jouvenel likens Rousseau's "Cité" to Durkheim's primitive and inferior forms of militant societies, which Taine foresaw and which we now see.

give in to his heart. And Rousseau himself wrote of Voltaire: "Avec beaucoup de génie, encore plus d'esprit et la plus belle plume de ce siècle, cet homme n'a qu'un cœur propre à faire toujours son malheur, et quelquefois celui des autres." (*Corr.gén.*, II, 119.) In the first five chapters of the *Contrat social* concerning popular sovereignty, in which we see today the very essence of democracy, Rousseau's head and heart were working in perfect unison to produce pages that eminently merit their place among *les œuvres immortelles*. Their highly-charged rhetoric, only slightly rearranged, was most appropriately published by the *Nation* in June, 1940, under the caption, "France Will Live Again," by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In much of the rest of the work, however, which is the principal subject of M. de Jouvenel's thesis, it is all too obvious that Rousseau did not have his heart in his deductions from the abstractions of Plato's *Republic*. Here the emotional overtones work against the logical substructure, with results that are often inhuman, unnatural and unrealistic. This aspect may still be useful to moralists who, like M. de Jouvenel, cry out against modern capitalism and industrialism. The modern return to nature will, however, be forced upon us on other grounds, namely the imminent necessity of re-examining man's "biophysical relationships with the earth."

Like H. F. Stewart's systematization of Pascal's thoughts, M. de Jouvenel's interpretation of Rousseau's political thought serves principally to show how the great books of the past can be belittled and often betrayed by the rigid application of systematic logic.

NORMAN L. TORREY

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*Stendhal*. By Matthew Josephson. Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday & Co., 1946. Pp. xiii+489.

*L'Œuvre de Stendhal*. By Henri Martineau. Paris, Le Divan, 1945. Pp. 546.

These two books are testimony to a persistent and even growing interest in Stendhal, an interest whose bifurcation they illustrate clearly. On the one hand, there is Henri Martineau, perhaps the most distinguished scholar of Stendhal, who, after completing the seventy-nine-volume *Divan* edition, is now fixing once and for all the history of the composition of Stendhal's works and their publication. On the other hand, there is Matthew Josephson, a "popular biographer," who after interpreting Hugo and Zola to the American public has now dealt with Stendhal. As might be expected, the points of view and methods of attack are quite different.

*L'Œuvre de Stendhal*, in thirty-three chapters, covers the complete body of Stendhal's work—the fourteen titles published in his lifetime and the great mass of posthumously edited material, considered here under the nineteen groupings which Martineau contrived for his monumental edition. Beginning with the earliest letters, in 1800, and going on to the last

notes or marginalia, in 1842, Martineau has provided us with details of composition, dates of editions or of manuscripts, conditions of publication—in a word, not only with the literary career of Stendhal but also with the history of that process of excavating and editing which, beginning with the edition of Colomb and Mérimée in 1853, has gone on through the work of such men as Stryenski, de Mitty, Paupe, and Arbelet to culminate only in the last two decades.

Though Martineau has not attempted to provide a detailed history of Stendhal's life or of his intellectual development, the work which he has produced naturally touches on such material at many points. It is by no means an introduction to Stendhal's life or thought—indeed the reader who knew nothing of the man would very likely find it somewhat baffling—but it is nonetheless full of details concerning that life to be found only with difficulty elsewhere and of wise comments on Stendhal's personality and ideas. Its methodology—discussing each of the works in order of composition—necessarily precludes a certain sort of continued analysis. For example, one will look in vain for a detailed study of the influence on Stendhal of Cabanis or Montesquieu, or for a study of his development as a novelist from *Armance* to *La Chartreuse de Parme*. Martineau picks up the volumes one by one, talks about each for a while with sympathy, understanding, and wisdom before putting it aside. But this talk, casual as it appears to be, is rich in facts and ideas; and the reader who cares to make the necessary synthesis for himself will find here an abundance of most valuable raw material.

Josephson is out to make Stendhal interesting to the general public. He has produced the most detailed biography of Stendhal available in English, though so far as analysis and criticism go, it does not really supersede the *Stendhal* of F. C. Green (which Josephson strangely refers to as being "partly in French"). On the whole it is factually accurate in its main lines, though it is easy to find a fair number of minor errors. Thus, for example, one might point out that it was not in 1828 but in 1829 that Stendhal began *The Red and the Black*, and that it seems almost certain that the *Life of Henri Brulard* was begun in 1835 in spite of Stendhal's pretense that the first chapter was written in 1832. Perhaps one should not expect too great bibliographical accuracy from a nonscholarly book, but Josephson is extremely careless in citing titles: those of the *History of Painting in Italy*, the *Life of Haydn, Rome, Naples and Florence*, and the *Life of Rossini*, as given by him are all inaccurate in one way or another. And he does not seem to realize that no edition of *De l'amour* in Stendhal's lifetime contained the chapter on "fiascos" or the story of the crystalized Salzburg branch. There are also a fair number of editorial slips or misprints: for example, de Chélan, de la Môle, Sédan, Fenelon. Two distinguished French scholars suffer a similar fate and appear throughout as Arbalet and Striyenski.



More important than these matters, however, is the general determination of Josephson to make out the best possible case for his subject. This is one of the natural temptations of biography, increased where Stendhal is concerned by the general and erroneous impression of him as a cynical monster without human emotions. When it is a question of Stendhal's personality, even Martineau goes on the defensive and struggles to dispel the notion of "un cœur sec, un jouisseur égoïste, un libertin cynique." Josephson makes a good deal of the more attractive side of that complex personality which he chooses to interpret generally from a psychoanalytic point of view. There seems to me to be a good deal that is specious in his interpretation: though the terminology may be impressive, such a sentence as this does not really say very much: "Undoubtedly, there was ambivalence in the 'narcissistic' Stendhal's relations with women, also a pronounced 'castration complex,' stemming from his passionate attachment to his mother and early loss of her in childhood."

It is not merely the natural impulse to present Stendhal's character in the most flattering light that is disturbing in Josephson's book. Rather it is the attitude represented by the following passage from the Introduction:

One thinks of him as being *alive*, as contemporary; and recalls with surprise that he was born during the reign of Louis XVI and died in the early years of Queen Victoria's regime. How, we ask ourselves, could he have arrived at opinions, ideas, and anxieties that we consider peculiarly the attributes of the twentieth-century mind? How could he have known, for instance, about suppressed desires or the inferiority complex—though he lived more than a hundred years ago? Or spoken in such "modern" terms about power politics, sex, religion, history, art, all the subjects that most absorb us today?

Even when the naïveté of such a passage is discounted, one is still unfortunately left with the idea of Stendhal as a precursor, a prophet, a man whose virtue is the doubtful quality of being "modern." It is this attitude that Josephson labors throughout his book: as a realist, a psychologist, an historian, or a writer on art and aesthetics, Stendhal is forced into the position of one who, turning his back on the stupidity around him, moved forward to a position that seems valuable to us today. But with all possible respect for Stendhal, one must simply say that this is not true. It becomes even ridiculous when in attempting to depict Stendhal as an acute politician, Josephson speaks of Stendhal's reports from Civita Vecchia as being unearthed by Albert Sorel "with cries of admiration." Now actually, while admiring Stendhal as a writer, Sorel spoke of the reports as showing "à quel point il était, par goût et par système, dépourvu des facultés qui font le grand observateur politique, encore plus de celles qui font l'homme d'État." And he wrote: "Stendhal avait-il l'étoffe du diplomate? Sa correspondance officielle n'en donne pas plus de signes que ses notes sur l'Italie et ses lettres intimes."

This striving to exalt Stendhal by aligning him with "modern" opinion



is perhaps most seriously mistaken when Josephson sees in him a leftist political thinker and stresses the fact that his novels were popular with the French Resistance: "One hundred and ten years afterwards, in 1940, the Resistance in defeated, occupied France, ruled by fascists, made the teachings of Stendhal and his hero, Julien, their secret cult." Stendhal was obviously opposed to the reaction that followed the Napoleonic collapse, just as he was opposed to most aspects of French conservatism—the church or the middle class. But to feel that such opposition carried with it any taste for democracy or any deep feeling of human equality is most certainly to misread him. If he wanted anything politically, it was a government where the happy few, the sensitive great souls, the intellectual elite would be bothered as little as possible by the stupidities of the aristocracy, the middle class, or the people. And any of his novels will make it clear that he saw the people, the *canaille*, as no less stupid, no less annoying than the other two classes. If Josephson wanted to cite Sorel on Stendhal as a political thinker he would have done better to accept this judgment: "La cité idéale de Beyle, c'est une grande et triomphale avenue des Champs-Élysées, bordée de villas et de concerts, où la Grande Armée victorieuse défile, musique en tête, devant les peuples qui l'acclament, au milieu de jeunes femmes qui lui prodiguent les sourires et les fleurs."

CHARLES WEIR, JR.

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*Essai sur la Jeune Parque de Paul Valéry.* By Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin. Brussels, L'Écran du Monde; Paris Itinéraires, [1948].<sup>1</sup> Pp. 85.

In the deluge of studies, essays and divagations which the death of Paul Valéry has precipitated, the recent contributions of Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin stand out for their penetration and facility of exposition. The *Essai sur la Jeune Parque*, though his most ambitious undertaking so far, may seem Lilliputian in comparison with Hans Sørensen's ponderous but equally brilliant study *La Poésie de Paul Valéry, étude stylistique sur la Jeune Parque* (Copenhagen, 1944) and yet his conclusions are, if anything, more significant for the future of Valéryan exegesis. While seeking to appeal to a wider public than his scholarly Danish colleague, Professor Duchesne-Guillemin bases his very readable essay on sound scholarship and displays none of the erratic qualities of a Pauline Mascagni whose *Initiation à Paul Valéry ou le roman d'un poète et de son lecteur* (1946) is as unpardonable as Gabory's essay on Proust a few years ago.

It is evident to the reader of Professor Duchesne-Guillemin's essay that this critic has exercised commendable restraint and that, for every citation given, he could produce many others. His work is based on painstaking analysis which seems to have begun, very suitably, with an *explication de*

1. This is the date given by the *Bibliographie de la France*. Probably 1947 is more correct since Edmond Jaloux mentioned this book in the *Nouvelles Littéraires* in that year.

*texte*, given, we may assume, as part of a course at Liège. With all his scholarship, however, he disdains to use the common apparatus of scholarship, the lowly bibliography and footnote. Scholarly apparatus would, of course, be unnecessary if the critic did not remark, in an annoyingly vague manner, "comme l'a dit la première Émilie<sup>2</sup> Noulet" (page 34) or refer to an ephemeral "lettre de Gide, récemment publiée" (page 60). Even Gustave Cohen did not eschew the customary critical amenities in his now classical *Essai d'explication du Cimetière marin*, although it was neatly published for the general public by Gallimard.

For every example in semantics, syntax or poetics in Duchesne-Guillemin, there are a hundred in Sørensen and probably not because the latter was first on the scene, since the Belgian scholar seems to be unaware of his predecessor's work. Rather, the Belgian's strength lies in his judicious choice of examples and his example (page 55) of Valéry's almost arbitrary substitution of one word for another, *race* for *corps*, gives the reader, as it were, in a flash, a better insight into Valéry's obscurantism than ten pages of quotations from Sørensen. In the compass of this review it is not possible to comment in detail on Professor Duchesne-Guillemin's illuminating discoveries since they abound on almost every page, particularly in the appendix entitled "Choix de gloses." His chief originality consists in an examination of the structure of the poem which he claims to have perceived by the novel process of having his wife memorize *La Jeune Parque*. Ultimately she discovered that the poem split into two "acts," the second beginning:

*Mystérieuse Moi, pourtant, tu vis encore . . .*

Later this observation was corroborated by finding a letter to Pierre Louys (*sic*) in which Valéry refers to the latter part of the poem as the "second aspect." On the supposition of two distinct acts with an intermission between, Professor Duchesne-Guillemin has reassembled the chronology of the poem, not as it grew according to what Sørensen calls the "fle" process, but rather as the methodical, mathematical mind of Valéry eventually conceived it. Thus he concludes that the "diamants extrêmes" of the second line of the poem does not mean "dernières étoiles de la nuit," as previous critics thought, but simply distant stars, proving that the poem begins at night and not at dawn. Similar reasoning leads to the conclusion that the "sommeil" mentioned in the second act is not identical with the "sommeil" of the first act but must have occurred during the intermission, so that there are two "sommeils" instead of one. In this manner, then, the critic reconstructs the sense of the poem, not for the purpose of bringing order out of chaos, since "l'ordre de succession des souvenirs [de la Jeune Parque] n'est nullement celui des événements," but to give the reader a better opportunity to penetrate the veil of metaphor by which Valéry's thought

2. Emilie becomes Emile on page 34.

is purposely obscured. The result is that the critic in no way diminishes Valéry's stature as a poet while he increases our admiration for his intellectual processes. It is these intellectual qualities, he says, which combine with the acoustic qualities, inherited from Mallarmé, to make Valéry superior to his symbolist predecessors.

DOUGLAS W. ALDEN

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*Mimesis. Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur.* By Erich Auerbach. Bern, A. Francke A. G. Verlag, 1946. Pp. 503.

Professor Auerbach's book has, notwithstanding a certain vagueness of method and some arbitrary assumptions in its underlying philosophy, considerable merits which make it one of the outstanding recent publications in the field of Romance Languages. First of all, the breadth of its conception and the richness of its material offer a welcome relief from the many studies on minor points and carefully limited topics, in which modern philology seems to lose itself. The author of *Mimesis* is one of the few scholars of our time who maintain alive the conception of the unity and coherence of the Romance Languages and their literature. He even goes beyond the boundaries of his field and deals with the literature of the Occident during a period of twenty centuries. To conceive of a work on such a large scale, to investigate themes which are common not only to French, Spanish, Italian, but also to Greek, Latin, English, and German literature, is a rare undertaking in modern scholarship. In nineteen chapters, each of which is devoted to an important stage in Europe's literary history, the author analyzes the various forms of mimesis, *i.e.* imitation of reality in literature. He begins with the *Odyssey* and the *Bible*, since these works offer, in his opinion, two fundamental forms of mimesis, which served as models for the following centuries. Unfortunately the author does not prove this surprising assertion which contradicts the generally accepted theory that it was Latin literature which exerted such a normative influence. As to Homer's influence on Vergil, which might justify his place at the beginning of the book, I do not think that this influence followed the pattern of mimesis which the author describes in his first chapter. After having taken his reader through many periods and stages of Occidental literature—of the Romanic literatures only Spanish literature is treated rather sparingly—Professor Auerbach concludes his book with an interpretation of a passage from Virginia Woolf and a comparison of her way of representation with that of Proust and Joyce.

The method used in *Mimesis* is that of style analysis, at least at the start of each section. A short passage is selected and its artistic structure is analyzed with a view to the specific way in which mimesis is used in the text. This analysis is accompanied and followed by general aesthetic, his-

torical, and philosophical reflexions on the author of the work and his period, as well as the relationship to other works and periods. A strong influence of the method which Leo Spitzer perfected in his *Stilstudien* and of the German *Geisteswissenschaft* is noticeable. *Mimesis* is thus not, as its subtitle suggests, a history of realism in Occidental literature. Such a history, the author states, would have been too comprehensive and might have been caught from the start in the deadlock of a definition of "realism." Professor Auerbach carefully avoids a philosophic clarification of his principles; he intentionally omits a foreword and plunges the reader right into *medias res*.

There is, particularly in the case of a German book, much to be said in favor of allotting minimum space to a discussion of principles and methods; still, both principle and method ought to be clear in the author's mind, and I am not sure that they are in the present work. Moreover, the author seems to make quite a case of the absence of definite principles and methods; he is almost methodical about it. Not only is he convinced that the interpretation of a selected passage will yield more insight into the work of an author and his period than a systematic and chronological treatment of the whole life and *opus*, but he confesses a profound unwillingness to impose definite methods and ideas upon a text. He admits that he has a few guiding ideas, but he is simply going to try them out on a number of texts; if they work, so much the better. The reader will not be surprised to learn that they do work. These ideas now, as we are told several times, have developed quite spontaneously and gradually out of a repeated reading of the works under discussion, and the selection of the texts is rather a result of chance and coincidence than of carefully planned search. If this praise à la Montaigne of the unsystematic and unmethodical, of the casual and playful—to believe the author, he is simply "playing" (page 497) with some texts that happened to come his way—were only a self-characterization of the author *en marge* of the text, we could pass over it with a smile. But it has entered into the substance of the book and into its style. Both the selection and the discussion of the texts are at times indeed *ad hoc* and playful, and the style, though remarkably flexible and fluid is often rambling and repetitious; it lacks rational control as well as conciseness and precision. In some respects it reminds one of the style of Thomas Mann; both authors take a never-ending delight in reflecting on the inventiveness of their minds. *Mimesis*, like *Der Zauberberg* and *Joseph*, creates the impression that there is no reason beyond the practical limitations of space and time, why the narrative should not go on.<sup>1</sup> This lack of beginning and end may be intentional (life itself goes on without end), but it seems ill-

1. As motto of his book the author chose a line by Andrew Marvell: "Had we but world enough and time." Taken in itself this line is quite appropriate, but I wonder whether Professor Auerbach realizes that it is taken from Marvell's poem "To his Coy Mistress" and goes on "This coyness, Lady, we're not crime."

suited to a "history of Occidental realism as expression of the changes in the self-interpretation of man."

This pursuit of the casual and playful is combined with certain philosophic ideas which are far from being casual and cannot have been derived from the texts themselves. As stated in the postscript of Professor Auerbach's book, the theme of mimesis is derived from Plato's discussion of imitation in art which, in the tenth book of the *Republic*, is characterized as being two steps removed from truth. This idea combined itself in the author's mind with Dante's claim to have presented true reality in his *Comedia* (page 494). How this combination of two ideas which seem contradictory could take place, the author does not say, nor does he explain why he starts from Plato's condemnation of art in a work which contains nothing but praise of the merits of art as a presentation of reality. The second "guiding principle" of Professor Auerbach's investigation is the development and the change of fortune of the classical idea of the different levels of style: the grand or sublime, the middle, and the low style. According to classicism, everyday reality can be presented only in a low or middle style, i.e. it can appear only as comical or grotesque. This idea is based on a hierarchy of spheres of reality. The author describes at some length the fact that the great realists of the nineteenth century revolted against this dictum; they presented in their works everyday reality in a serious and elevated style and stressed the economical, social and historical conditions of life as well as the importance of the average man as subject matter of literary presentation. More original is the author's analysis of several examples of this art and the way he contrasts them with the "abstract" and a-historic model-man of classical and classicist art. This section of *Mimesis* suffers somewhat, as does the whole book, from the extremely fluctuating character of the term "realism" and from the, as I am inclined to think, rather gratuitous assumption that Zola or any other naturalistic or realistic writer is closer to reality than Racine.

The theory of the different levels of style was, as Professor Auerbach shows, abandoned not only in the nineteenth century, but already during the Middle Ages, though for reasons that have nothing in common with those of Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, or Zola. In the Middle Ages as well as in the Renaissance there existed a serious mimesis of everyday reality. Its origin is to be found, according to Professor Auerbach, in the Bible with its mixture of common reality and high tragedy both in subject matter and style. The author finds it difficult to define the essence of this Christian conception of life, but he believes that it was made possible by the use of figurative or figural interpretation of life. This interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons of real and historical character; the first points to, or signifies the second, while the second includes or fulfills the first. Thus, to select an instance which Professor Auerbach does not mention, but which is familiar to readers of English

literature, Samson of the Old Testament is for Donne and Milton a figure of Christ: "the times before him had him in prophecy and the times after him" had him "more consummately in Christ" (Donne, *Biathanatos*, Part III, Distinction v, Section 4). Figural interpretation has been, for many centuries, a well-established and well-known form of theological exegesis and is based upon the belief in the prophecy of real events. Professor Auerbach bases his interpretation of his selections from the Middle Ages on the use of *figura*; it gives in his opinion the key to the realism of the Middle Ages which, in its perfect achievements, is the highest form of realism that ever existed.

I am not certain that I follow the author's line of reasoning, but it seems to me that he attributes too much to figurative interpretation and that he handles it almost as a magic word. The use of *figura* is one of the many forms of emblematic interpretation of events or persons; symbolism and allegory in its many aspects are others. I can see only one reason why figurative interpretation should appear more "real" than others: the two points of comparison are historical, hence "real." But then again their comparison and relation do not depend upon themselves but upon something which transcends both. They are figurative *sub specie aeternitatis* and not *sub specie temporis*; hence figurative interpretation does not really differ from symbolism in which also something eternal or spiritual is contemplated in its "real" form which belongs to time and space. In itself *figura* does not lead to realism and I doubt that Dante's great realistic art is a result of his use of *figura*. There are, to be sure, many traces of this use in the *Comœdia* as every reader of the work and its standard Italian commentaries knows. In some instances Dante follows a well-established Latin tradition and does not seem to rely on a theological interpretation which, by the way, is not specifically Christian, but goes back at least to Philo. Professor Auerbach seems aware that he is using a term which has a long tradition behind it; he nevertheless treats figural interpretation as if it were a revolutionary discovery. The only new feature of his treatment is that he transforms a well-determined form of theological exegesis into an aesthetic category, without justifying this transformation (which, in my opinion, is rather perilous), and without defining it in clear and solid categories. Its broad application has many dangers. In the case of the *Mystère d'Adam*, for instance, the method of figurative interpretation blows up a charmingly primitive and naïve text to grotesquely monumental proportions. In other cases however, particularly in that of Dante, Professor Auerbach's method leads to very gratifying results. One could only wish that he had brought the implied philosophy, the many speculative undercurrents of his deliberations into the open. The constant allusions and references to something which either is not or cannot be defined, but only described in its effects, leaves the reader suspended in mid-air.



The value of *Mimesis* does not however depend entirely upon the acceptance of the theory of *figura*, on the evaluation of "realism," on high, middle or low style, and on the many characterizations which the author gives of his own method. Whether or not the reader agrees with Professor Auerbach's selections and his philosophy, or more exactly with what is expressed of it, he will find the book stimulating and challenging. Professor Auerbach is a very intelligent, cultivated, widely read, sensitive and exceptionally observing author. The mere fact that a text is studied with such great attention and concentration, with so much leisure and knowledge, is highly commendable. His frequent application to literary texts of categories from other disciplines, for instance from the interpretation of works of art (the influence of H. Wölfflin and his school as well as of E. Panofsky is very striking) and his use of literary categories from German romanticism and from Goethe and Schiller, will surprise many readers in this country, but should prove to be a stimulating change from our own all too well-established and somewhat monotonous categories and criteria.

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*Storia della lingua italiana.* By Bruno Migliorini. Milano, Carlo Marzorati, 1948. Pp. 48.

This brief work, published as a separate pamphlet, also appears as a chapter of the larger work *Problemi ed orientamenti critici di lingua e di letteratura italiana*, edited by A. Momigliano. In it, Migliorini traces, with the deft, sure hand of an expert, the external and internal history of the Italian language.

The first part classifies and describes the Italian dialects and outlines the major linguistic characteristics of the various centuries from the 960 A. D. Formulas of Monte Cassino to the present. Part II is worked out in original fashion. The author takes one phenomenon from the field of phonology (the Italian outcome of short stressed *o*); one from the morphological domain (the development of the Italian first person singular of the imperfect indicative); one from syntax (the position of object pronouns at the beginning of the sentence), and develops these three sample topics in full, following them up with a somewhat more exhaustive discussion of lexical development. A brief Appendix dealing with the history of Italian grammars and dictionaries, and a short but well-selected Bibliography complete this very useful offering, which is well qualified to serve as an auxiliary text for classes in the history of the Italian tongue.

We have always admired in Migliorini the combination of lucid exposition and thoroughgoing scholarship, as well as the quality of moderate, reasonable exposition of points of view of a controversial nature. These praiseworthy traits are very much in evidence in this latest of his many

interesting and useful works. In the same spirit of serene objectivity that he displays, a few remarks may be here offered.

Of interest in connection with von Wartburg's theories concerning the paramount influence of the Longobards in the development of Italian, particularly for what concerns diphthongization, is Migliorini's recognition (page 19) that the Longobards "failed to reintroduce the aspirate *h* in Italian, as the Franks did in French"; also (page 20) the recognition that the Italian dialects of the south diphthongize short *e* and short *o* in the checked position, quite like Spanish. Migliorini did not protest at the time of the appearance of von Wartburg's *Posizione della lingua italiana*,<sup>1</sup> but he now presents his views in definite, though non-controversial fashion.

Migliorini is fundamentally correct in his statement (page 16) that Italian is a language with a strong literary substratum. This statement might be further extended to the effect that in Italian the line of demarcation between what is popular and what is learned is extremely difficult to draw. Equally hard to establish is the boundary between Vulgar Latin and early Italian in the two centuries that precede the Monte Cassino documents, and often in the two that follow them. Migliorini is quite right in calling attention to the fact that it is an error to limit one's study of linguistic documents to works of a literary nature (page 3); the language of law-makers, scientists, merchants, etc. must be studied with equal care.

Linguistic nationalism is a phenomenon that perennially recurs, and not in the Italian field alone. To say, as Migliorini does (page 6), that Sardinian, Rhetian and Dalmatian are closer to Italian than to other Romance groups will lead some to accuse him of a historical inaccuracy based on geographic grounds. Sardinian is at least as close to Spanish as it is to Italian; Rhetian approximates Franco-Provençal as much as it does Gallo-Italian; and there are strong links between Dalmatian and Rumanian.

The *Storia della lingua* controversy is almost as old as the Italian language itself. Migliorini, of course, takes sides, though not in offensive fashion. It is worth while taking some of his statements which have a bearing on this point (whether literary Italian is mainly based on Florentine or whether it is a conglomeration of or compromise among the dialects of the north, center and south) and placing them in juxtaposition.

... in the first decades of the 13th century we find in the Po Valley traces of a common tongue for didactic poetry, in Tuscany private notes written in Florentine or Sienese, at the Swabian court a lyric poetry in a refined *volgare*, obtained by planing down Sicilian. ... Merchants who travelled outside their region, if they could not make themselves understood by speaking their own dialect and helping themselves out with the little Latin they knew, could only get along as best they could, for Italian did not yet exist. ... Between the local and regional dialects on the one hand and medieval Latin on the other, the *volgare* comes in like a wedge, acquiring ever-growing functions. ... (Page 2.)

1. W. von Wartburg, *La Posizione della lingua italiana*, Firenze, 1940, pp. 20-26; see also my review in *RR*, February, 1941, pp. 109-114.

This seems somewhat inconsistent. Either a *volgare* existed at the outset of the 13th century (before Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio), or it did not. If it did not, how can we explain the "traces of a common tongue" in the Po Valley or at the court of Sicily, two regions where local peculiarities are especially strong? Others have said that at the time of Dante the *volgare* existed only in Dante's imagination. Migliorini is too intelligent and well informed to duplicate such an assertion. The historical facts are what they are, and they point to the existence of a common tongue long before the "Big Three" of Italian literature set the linguistic norm.

Migliorini is a respecter of facts. He takes pains to remind us (page 4) that the geographically central position of the Tuscan dialects conferred upon them a natural mediating function between north and south, even before special dignity was conferred upon them by the prestige of the three great Florentine writers. This statement deserves perhaps to be extended to include all central dialects, even the Roman which Migliorini claims (page 5) was "decidedly a southern-type dialect" until the 16th century, being at that time replaced by an imported Florentine. This process, however, is far from being so extensive as some claim. Most of the phenomena appearing in Roman documents before the 16th century are still current in the *Romanesco* of today; on the other hand, "southern" phenomena appearing in those documents can still be found today in dialects spoken far to the north of Rome.<sup>2</sup> The replacement of a literary dialect by another is a common enough phenomenon, but the replacement of the spoken popular dialect of one locality by that of another is not. Lastly, there is no greater divergence between old and modern Roman than there is between old and modern Florentine. The replacement of old Roman by something imported from Florence is a very convenient thesis for the Tuscanists, but it is founded neither on historical nor on linguistic facts.

This brings us to the last line of defense of the Tuscanists. "Unfortunately, the genuine character of the early Italian language of poetry" (as developed in the Po Valley and in Sicily; page 9) "is revealed to us only in part and by conjecture from linguistic analysis, because the texts that have come down to us were copied by Tuscan scribes and therefore strongly Tuscanized."

This is an attitude common to far too many Romance philologists. When the historical texts don't jibe with their views, it is fashionable to accuse the texts of being unreliable and to seek evidence of what "must have been" from something vaguely styled "linguistic analysis."

If it were true that these early texts were corrected or Tuscanized as they were being copied, why were so many localisms left uncorrected? What a *tour de force* it must have been for an early Tuscan scribe to correct works in Sicilian and Bolognese! Not a work of correction, we would say, but one of outright translation. From the time of Dante on, local writers

2. Pei, *Italian Language*, New York, 1941, pp. 185, 187-188, 159-160.

often use their own dialect;<sup>3</sup> why were not these writings corrected or translated, at a time when a literary norm had been fully set? Finally, how trustworthy is the evidence that these early writings were actually copied by Tuscan scribes?<sup>4</sup>

Tuscanists are unable to escape both horns of the dilemma that faces them: either there was a *volgare*, *illustre* or otherwise, before the time of Dante, in which eventuality the Florentines cannot be said to have initiated the literary Italian language, but only to have polished and refined it and given it vogue; or there was no such *volgare*, a somewhat untenable hypothesis, in view of its use almost a century before Dante, and in this case we are forced to call the myriad words and phonetic and morphological tendencies in which literary Italian diverges from Florentine the result of "dialectal borrowing." But dialectal borrowing as heavy as that shown by literary Italian is really tantamount to a linguistic blending or compromise, which apparently took place before the time of Dante, and consequently throws us back upon the other horn of the dilemma. Perhaps the entire question is one of definition and terminology. Literary Italian is admittedly closer to the central dialects (not necessarily to Florentine, or even to "Tuscan"); but this can easily be explained, as Migliorini suggests, by the central geographical position of those dialects. As for the merchants who got along as best they could before the 13th century, it is our belief that precisely those merchants were responsible for the growth of a *lingua franca* which was later given literary form by the Sicilian, Umbrian, Bolognese and, finally, Florentine writers. It is illogical to suppose that seafaring republics like Pisa, Amalfi, Genoa and Venice traded along the extended Italian coasts without creating some measure of a common tongue, based partly upon the local dialects where the latter showed some degree of similarity, partly upon forms reconstructed from the Latin which was the common tongue of scholarship and the Church. It was this Latin *point de repère* which was largely responsible for setting at least the written appearance of the common tongue. A rough, unpolished *volgare*, blending together the talk of Florentine and Milanese bankers, Roman churchmen, Bolognese schoolmen, and Genoese, Amalfitan, Pisan, Sicilian and Venetian seafarers, probably existed for some centuries before the days of Dante, in an indefinite, fluctuating state, influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the local dialects, and spoken by a relatively small minority of people who had occasion to travel beyond the narrow borders of their own regions; a situation, we may add, not too unlike the one which exists in Italy today.

3. Migliorini claims (p. 6) that after literary Florentine assumed the functions of a common literary tongue, and as late as the 14th and 15th centuries, traces of regional dialects appear in the writings of northern and southern writers trying to write in Italian.

4. Bertoni, *Il Duecento* (Milano, 1910), p. 245: "Non v'ha dunque altra soluzione possibile: che cioè la nostra vetusta lingua poetica ci sia stata abbastanza fedelmente conservata dagli antichi manoscritti, e non sia passata per nulla attraverso ad alcune fasi, determinate dal suo migrare dal Sud al Nord e dal suo cadere nelle mani di amanuensi toscani."

It is the merit of Sicilian, Bolognese and Umbrian writers that they first attempted to use this common tongue for literary purposes, and the merit of the great Florentines and their followers that they gave it its ultimate refining and set it on the road to become the national tongue.<sup>5</sup>

But all this is a matter of points of view and, perhaps, definition of terms. Migliorini has made another notable contribution to the history of the Italian language and its teaching methodology.

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*Tesoro lexicográfico (1492-1726)*. By Samuel Gili Gaya. Tomo primero. Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1947. Pp. 282.

The present fascicle includes only the letter *A*. Its dense pages, larger than those of the *Diccionario* of the Spanish Academy, list and define approximately 8500 words. For sixteen years at the Centro de Estudios Históricos of Madrid, Mr. Gili Gaya and his assistants worked at the collection and classification of the articles of ninety-three old dictionaries, from the *Vocabulario de romance en latín* (1492) of Antonio de Nebrija to the lexicographic studies of Berganza and Feijóo (1721 and 1726) immediately preceding the great *Diccionario de autoridades* of the Academy. The mass of material assembled totals some 268,000 filing cards corresponding to approximately 55,000 words. The portion which is now published was already printed in 1936. The author estimates that within a few months the volume covering the letter *B* will appear and that the publication of the entire work may require five or six years more.

Interesting information is contained in the introduction concerning the influence of the *Vocabulario* of Nebrija, the basis and the model of numerous subsequent dictionaries; the great number of bilingual dictionaries and treatises on the teaching of Spanish which appeared during the period of the main Spanish influence in international affairs; the linguistic progress represented by the dictionaries of Francisco del Rosal (1601) and of Sebastian de Covarrubias (1611), and the antiquity and importance of the Spanish nautical vocabularies representative of an epoch of the national life particularly linked with maritime enterprises.

The references concerning each word are arranged chronologically. In general, each new dictionary is in large part a copy of previous work of a similar nature. The handling of such extensive material in the process of classification and deletion of unnecessary repetitions reveals the same careful method which Mr. Gili Gaya has demonstrated in his various publications on experimental phonetics and philological problems. He is the author of the most complete and modern study of Spanish syntax: *Curso superior*

5. Bertoni, *ibid.*, p. 244: "Perché la lingua di Firenze s'imponesse del tutto agli altri volgari, bisognava attendere che il fiore della civiltà italiana passasse in quella città e che Dante determinasse addirittura il predominio intellettuale del suo paese su tutta l'Italia."

de sintaxis española, Mexico, 1943. His revision of the dictionary *Voz* (Barcelona), has given new value to this work.

The *Tesoro* promises to be a basic instrument, not only for the history of Spanish lexicography but for the general study of Spanish philology as well. The articles of the *Tesoro* show the gradual growth of words with the addition of new meanings, provide information concerning the regional character of some entries and present the first examples of words of American origin which obtained attention and space in the Spanish dictionaries.

The effect produced by the first fascicle of the *Tesoro* makes it all the more desirable that Mr. Gili Gaya, who has devoted such great effort to the achievement of this endeavor, should find the assistance necessary to complete the publication of this important work.

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*Estudios sobre el español de Nuevo Méjico*. By Aurelio M. Espinosa, Parte II: *Morfología*. Translation, revision and notes by Angel Rosenblat. (Biblioteca de Dialectología Hispanoamericana, II) Buenos Aires, Instituto de Filología, 1946. Pp. x+394.

The first volume (*Fonética*) of the *Estudios* by Aurelio M. Espinosa, translated and annotated by Amado Alonso and Angel Rosenblat, was published in 1930. That volume marks the beginning of the *Biblioteca de Dialectología Hispanoamericana* of the Instituto de Filología de Buenos Aires. Between 1930 and 1946 there appeared four more volumes of this collection: on the language in *Martín Fierro*, III; on the Spanish of Mexico, the United States and Central America, IV; on the language of Santo Domingo, V; and on that of Chile, VI. The present volume, which contains the second part of the *Estudios* of Espinosa (*Morfología*), accompanied by the extensive additions of Rosenblat, closes the Argentine era of the Instituto de Filología, which is now renewing its activities under the auspices of the Colegio de Méjico.

Professor Alonso, director of the Instituto, in the preface points out with justifiable satisfaction the usefulness of these books as a rich fund of linguistic facts systematically arranged for the benefit of Spanish philology and Romance philology in general. The work accomplished by Professor Alonso and his collaborators does not consist only of the compilation and annotation of the studies collected in these books. His effort has succeeded in maintaining a firm orientation by means of which scattered items of information on the language of different regions of Hispanic America appear coordinated with each other and adequately placed in the light of present problems of linguistic science.

Espinosa's remarks on the relationship between the morphological modifications of New Mexican and those of other areas in which Spanish is



spoken are amplified in Rosenblat's notes. The copious bibliography upon which these notes are based is exhaustive. The chapter on the morphology of the verb and the points relating to the interjections *malhaya* and *ojald* are outstanding for their careful and rich documentation. Alongside the material which Rosenblat gathers from secondary sources can be seen in many instances the extensive contribution which resulted from his personal research.

After a perusal of these pages, the feeling that the changes in popular Spanish with respect to morphology are less profound and differential than those having to do with phonetics is strengthened. What fails to appear in the work is the morphology of the noun, an aspect of the problem which is of prime importance. Perhaps the author has reserved it for treatment in a special study. The organized body of information which this book affords will make it an indispensable work of reference for all research on these matters.

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